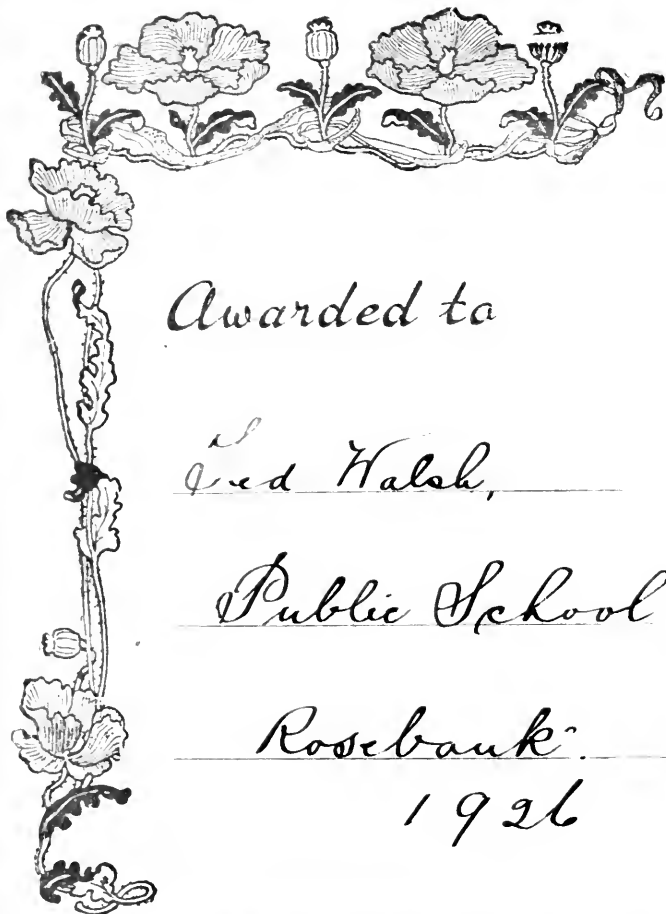


THREE SAILOR BOYS





Awarded to

Ed Walsh,

Public School,

Rosebank.

1926







"We went to our oars with all our strength."

THREE SAILOR BOYS

OR

ADRIFT IN THE PACIFIC

BY

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"IN SAVAGE AFRICA," ETC.

THOMAS NELSON AND SONS, LTD.

LONDON, EDINBURGH, AND NEW YORK

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN AT
THE PRESS OF THE PUBLISHERS

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ADrift IN THE PACIFIC.

CHAPTER I.

THE RUNAWAYS.

“LOOK out, boys, or we shall never fetch the ship again!”

“Why, what’s the matter?”

“Matter enough; we’re ever so far from her, and there’s a storm brewing. Just look to the westward and see what a bank the sun is setting in.”

Sure enough, a lurid, red sun was setting in a bank of heavy, black clouds, which had already obscured his lower half, and the surface of which was flecked with little, white, fleecy dots, moving rapidly, which looked as if the port-holes of some giant craft had been opened and her guns fired.

In an open boat were I, Sam Hawse, and the two speakers, my companions, Tom Arbor and Bill Seaman, and a mile and a half or two miles away lay a ship with her upper sails furled, courses hauled up, and topsails lowered on the cap, while the surface of the

sea was like glass, though a long, heavy swell was rolling up from the westward, heralding the approach of the storm of which the clouds pointed out by Tom Arbor were the visible harbingers.

The ship was the *Golden Fleece*, a clipper barque; and we were three boys belonging to her, and had on this the third day of continuous and stark calms been sent away to try our hands at turning a turtle, of which some had been seen floating on the surface, and had already been successful in securing two; and going on in search of others, we had got farther from the *Golden Fleece* than either we wished or intended.

"See there," continued Tom; "it's all hands aboard the barky. The skipper he sees what's coming, and ain't a-goin' to be caught napping. Come, we must give way and get aboard as soon as we may; he'll be in no pleasant temper, and the mate or bos'n will give us a rope's-ending for supper."

Besides the fear of the reception which awaited us, we saw the truth of what Tom said, and bent to our oars with all our strength.

Before, however, we had covered half the distance which lay between us and the *Golden Fleece*, the clouds had risen and obscured the heavens, and we could feel faint, chill puffs of air fanning our cheeks.

"Give way, lads," cried Tom, who was pulling stroke, "or we shall never reach her; and in a cockle-shell like this we can never live out a storm such as is coming on."

Bill and I needed no urging, and if possible pulled harder than before ; but suddenly Tom's oar broke in half, and he fell on his back in the bottom of the boat.

Bill, astonished at this, let go his oar, and it fell overboard and drifted astern.

As soon as Tom regained his seat, we looked round for the ship, and saw that she was paying off before the wind with a fore-staysail set, and that, even if we had our oars, there would be small hope of our reaching her, while to windward we could see the rain coming down on us like a wall.

"Well, lads, we're in a fix now," said Tom ; "give me your oar, Sam, and I'll see if I can scull back to pick up Bill's oar."

"Not much use in that ; the rain will be on us in five minutes, and we shall be able to see nothing," I said ; and almost as I spoke, a flash of lightning seemed to strike the water in our immediate vicinity, and was instantly followed by a crash of thunder, which sounded as if heaven and earth were coming to an end.

"Out with your knives, quick, and cut the sails loose, and get the lug over the bows fast to the painter ; we may ride to it, while I keep her bows on with the oar" (our only remaining one), cried Tom.

Indeed, this was our only chance, for the rain was upon us and the lightning was flashing all around us ; and in less time than it takes to tell of it, Tom and

I had the sail over the bows, and bent on to the painter with the tack, and weighted by the leads of some fishing-lines, which were fortunately in the boat.

By the time this was finished, the ship was hidden from our sight by the storm; and soon the freshness of the rain turned to salt from the spray driven by the wind, and the full force and fury of the storm fell on us.

Fortunately the sea did not get up rapidly, being kept down by the strength of the wind, and Tom managed to keep us bows on, and our hastily-extemporized sea-anchor prevented it from breaking over us; but Bill and I had all our work cut out to bail out the water, which we did with a bailer and bucket that were by good-luck in the boat.

After about two hours, as it must have been, though to us it seemed much longer, the storm abated, leaving a nasty, confused sea; but we were able to keep the boat afloat and fairly dry, though the long, dark night was most dreary.

At last the day began to dawn, and when the sun rose the clouds dispersed and the sea got calmer by degrees. Our first anxiety was to look for the *Golden Fleece*, and we eagerly scanned the horizon for some signs of her; but not a sail was to be seen, and we three lads were alone in an open boat on the wide ocean.

Before going any farther I may as well describe

the three occupants of the boat, and say who we were. Tom Arbor, as the eldest, should stand first. He was about seventeen years of age, and was strong built and active. Like Seaman and myself, he was an orphan and the son of a sailor drowned at sea. His mother had brought him up to the best of her ability, and would have kept him with her, and opposed his following in his father's footsteps and going to sea with her utmost power; but she could no more prevail with him than a hen who has sat upon ducks' eggs can stop her brood from taking to the nearest water by clucking. Accordingly, when but twelve years of age, he had stowed himself away on board a ship bound round the Horn to California; and, not being found till long after the pilot had left, had made the voyage, and, the skipper being a kindly man, had been well treated. When he came home he had found his mother married again to a small shopkeeper, and she no longer said a word against his being a sailor; and he had made a voyage to China and back before shipping on board the *Golden Fleece*, about six months before. He was a cheerful, good-natured lad, with dark-brown hair and eyes, and was certainly for his years a good sailor, and could hand, reef, and steer, splice a rope, and pull an oar as well as many who were longer at sea and older in years.

Bill Seaman had been picked up on the sea-shore when about two years old, and was supposed to be the only survivor from the wreck of a large ship, in

which it was thought his father had been lost ; but no means had come to hand to establish who his father was, and he had, by the interest of some of the gentry living near where he was found, been brought up in an establishment for the orphans of sailors till it was closed, and he was sent to a workhouse. He was a clever, bright boy, but small for his age.

My mother had died when I was born, and when the ship in which my father was an A.B. came home, the news was given to an aunt of my mother's who had taken charge of me that he had fallen off the fore-topsail yard off Cape Horn in a winter gale and been drowned ; so my old relative, the only one I ever knew, had obtained admission for me into the same asylum as Seaman ; and as she died soon after, I was as destitute of friends or relations as he was. In this asylum we continued till about the age of seven, when from one cause or another it was closed, and Seaman and myself were sent to a workhouse.

Here our life was by no means a happy one, and two or three times we ran away and tried to get taken as boys on board ships sailing from the seaport near which the workhouse was ; but no one would take us, as we were too small and young, and we were always caught and taken back to the workhouse, where we were flogged and severely punished for our attempts to escape.

As may be imagined, our repeated attempts to escape did not cause our treatment to be any better ;

so, after the last time we were brought back, when we had undergone our punishment, Bill and I consulted together and agreed—we were only twelve at the time—that we should wait until we were two years older, when we hoped to be big and strong enough to be accepted by some captain, and then to make another try for freedom.

During these two years we did all in our power to be considered good boys, and with some success, and applied ourselves to learning the trades which were taught us, Bill being taught shoemaking, while I was instructed in carpentering; and at the end of these two years we had both made some progress.

Our intention of going to sea, however, never left us, though our good conduct caused us to be treated more kindly than had hitherto been the case; but I must say that our instructors punished us for any mistakes or carelessness most severely, though of this we did not take much notice, for we saw equal measure served out to all our companions, and never for a moment doubted that it was part and parcel of the necessary teaching.

When we were about fourteen we were both called before the guardians, who spoke to us kindly, and said that it was their intention to apprentice us to our respective trades, for which we had shown great aptitude, and that in about a week or so we should be bound over to the masters who had been chosen for us.

When we left the board-room I said to Seaman that the time had come for us to try to run away to sea again, for if we were bound apprentice, which, I know not why, among us and our comrades was looked upon as a dreadful thing, we should never be able to get away, and in any case we should be separated.

He quite agreed with me, and we made up our minds to get away the next night. Our dormitory was on the first floor, and had a long range of windows, guarded by iron bars, which overlooked a narrow lane leading down into a part of the town composed of sailors' lodging-houses, and along which scarcely any one passed after dark.

The bars of the windows had only lately been put in order by the boys in the carpenter's shop, and with a screw-driver one could be easily removed, so that we could get through and cut away the lead of the windows.

Bill promised me that he would manage to get a shoemaker's knife to cut the lead, while I had to procure a screw-driver, which I did without being noticed.

Next night, when the occupants of the dormitory were all sound asleep, we set about our work, and while Bill got the cord which stretched the sacking of our beds to lower ourselves into the lane, I unscrewed the bars and cut the lead framing away.

Some of the other boys were disturbed by the

noise ; but we were amongst the biggest and strongest, and by threats and persuasion managed to prevent them giving the alarm until the last moment, when, leaving behind us the knife and screw-driver and all our clothes but our shirts and trousers, for we did not wish to be considered thieves as well as runaways, we slid down the rope, and on reaching the bottom scudded away as fast as we could towards the nearest seamen's haunt.

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CHAPTER II.

IN HIDING.

WE soon heard people in pursuit of us, and their shouts roused the people in the houses near, and sailors and boarding-house keepers came out into the streets and alleys to see what the commotion was all about.

We ran on blindly, dodging some who would have stopped us, and not knowing where to look for safety and shelter, when a great, burly fellow in a crimson waistcoat and fur cap seized us by the collars and stayed our progress.

"Whither bound, you rascals?" he said.

"Oh, please, sir, we've left the workhouse, and want to go to sea," we panted out.

"Come along," he said, and shoved us before him into a gloomy court, and then into a door, and after that through passages, some dark and some dimly lighted, and up and down broken and slippery stairs, until at last we came into a small room, which was lighted by a couple of tallow candles stuck into bottles. On one side was a bunk like a ship's, and in the

middle a deal table, on which were a bottle and glasses.

"There," said our guide; "I don't think the beadles'll catch you now. 'Twould puzzle them to find their way here. Now, let's have a look at you, and see whether you're worth keeping, or 'twould pay best to get a reward for taking you back."

"Oh, don't take us back," we cried, for though the appearance of our companion was not calculated to inspire confidence, we knew that we should be severely punished if we were taken back to the workhouse, and that the chance of getting to sea would be farther off from us than ever.

"Stow that," he said. "First and foremost, how old are ye, and what can ye do?"

"Please, sir, our names are Bill Seaman and Sam Hawse, and we can do shoemaking and carpentering, and we're fourteen."

"A snab and a chips. Which is which? Now, one at a time. Seaman, what are you?"

"I've learned shoemaking, sir."

"And you, Hawse, are a carpenter?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, you seems likely, and I'll keep you a day or two. Come along with me," and opening a door he went into a long room, at one end of which was a sort of stage, where a man was roaring out a song to the accompaniment of an old fiddler, and which was full of sailors drinking and smoking and eating.

In one corner of this room was a narrow staircase, up which our conductor took us, and after passing through rooms full of beds, up other flights of stairs, and along passages, we came at last to a small den or cupboard, whose sloping ceiling told us it was close under the roof. Here the man with the red waistcoat told us we could sleep, and giving us a blanket to wrap ourselves in, shut and locked the door, leaving us in the dark.

Bill and I were too frightened to say much, so we rolled ourselves up in the blanket as best we might, and tried to sleep.

Next day we feared we had been forgotten, for we heard all sorts of noises below us, but no one came near us, and we began to think we had done a very foolish thing in running away, as in the workhouse, though the food was not always to our taste, still there was enough, and it came at regular hours.

We tried to attract attention by hammering at the door and shouting, and when that was of no avail we tried to find some means of getting out; but we could not find any, for the whole of the place was carefully boarded.

At last we heard voices and footsteps outside, and the man with the red waistcoat opened the door and said to some one who accompanied him: "There, you can lie hid there till she's sailed; it's the snuggest stow in the place. Why," said he in astonishment, "there's them two kids. Blow my eyes, I'd forgotten them.

D'ye think your old man would give anything for them ? ”

The newcomer, who was a sailor of a somewhat forbidding aspect, said, “ I shouldn't wonder ; boys is useful. He might give a sov. or two for the pair, and what with kit and advances, as he calls it, make 'em work the v'yge for nought.”

“ That'll do ; when d'ye say the *Golden Fleece* sails ? ”

“ Why, she's hauled out of dock, and sails next tide.”

“ But won't he wait for hands ? How many of you have run ? ”

“ Some half-dozen.”

“ So that's it ; I can give him the men and these boys too.”

“ Don't give me up.”

“ No, you dunderhead ; you're worth more ashore than afloat. How many advance notes have you cashed in a month ? ”

“ Five.”

“ Well, that does me well enough.”

The newcomer took our place in the cupboard, but he was supplied with food and drink and a light, which had not been granted to us ; and the man with the red waistcoat told us to follow him.

I said, “ Please, sir, give us something to eat.”

“ Bless me, you must be hungry,” he said. “ I'd clean forgotten you. Now come along, and you shall have a blow-out.”

We followed the man down to a sort of kitchen in a cellar, where three or four women were at work, and he told them to give us something to eat.

A tin dish full of broken victuals was given to us, and we were told to sit in a corner and eat it.

Whilst we were doing so, the women occasionally came and laughed at us for the way we devoured our food ; but seeing how hungry we were, when the first dishful was finished they gave us more.

At last our hunger was appeased ; and then we were made to help as best we could these women, who told us they were the cooks of the place, which was one of the largest seamen's lodging-houses in the place, and was kept by the man in the red waistcoat, whose name was Crump.

In the kitchen we passed the day, but about dusk we were sent for to Mr. Crump's sanctum, where we found him and a decently-dressed, sailor-like man whom he called Captain Haxell, but whose face looked like some bird of prey, his eyes were so sharp and dark and his nose so hooked and pointed.

"There are the lads now, captain," said Mr. Crump, as the kitchen wenches had told us to call him, "and I think you'll find them smart and handy."

"Stand up, and let's see you," said the captain. "So you wish to go to sea ? Where are your friends ? Got none, d'ye say ? Stow that. Now, your names."

We told him our names, and he answered, "Pursers' names both, you young rascals ; but, come now, I

admire spirit in lads, and though there's some risk, I'll take you as 'prentices.—Got any 'prentice forms, Crump?"

"Yes, captain," answered that worthy, and produced two sheets of paper on which was some writing, which Captain Haxell told us to sign, and which he put in his pocket.

After this Crump took us to another room, where were sailors' slops of all kinds, and gave us each a blue shirt and trousers, cap, and jacket.

We put them on, and asked for the shirts and trousers we took off to be sent back to the workhouse, as it would not be honest to keep them.

Mr. Crump gave a grin, and said our wishes should be attended, which made us very happy, for the idea of stealing even the shirts and trousers had been weighing heavy on our mind; but I am now afraid that the workhouse authorities never saw those trousers or shirts again.

Captain Haxell, when we returned, said, "Ah! that's the style, my young sailors.—Now, Mr. Crump, how about the men?"

"All right, captain; I've them handy, and a wagon to take them and their chests down, and the lads too."

Mr. Crump went out, and soon a certain amount of noise was heard in the passage outside the little den where we were, as if heavy things were being carried along, and then when it was quiet again Mr. Crump came in and said, "All ready, captain. Now, pay me."

"Oh, I'll pay you on board ; come along of me."

"No, I'm too old a bird for that ; I'm not going to be paid with the fore-topsail. Pay down here, or not a soul leaves."

Captain Haxell tried persuasion, and said he had left all his money aboard, and to go to the ship and come back would cause him to lose a tide.

"Can't help that," said Crump. "Pay or leave ; them's my words."

At last, seeing that Mr. Crump was obdurate, Captain Haxell took a pocket-book out of his breast-pocket, and handed over some banknotes.

"There, that's right—honest seaman and no fraud," said Crump. "Now have a glass before you start," and, suiting the action to the word, he filled a couple of tumblers from a bottle that stood on the table.

The two worthies drank together, and then Captain Haxell, telling us to follow him, left the room and went to a sort of yard, where a covered wagon with a horse ready harnessed to it was waiting.

"Tumble in," said our captain, for so we now must call him, and accordingly we clambered up into the hind part, and found it lumbered with sea-chests and drunken or drugged men ; while Captain Haxell, mounting the box, told the driver to go to the water-side.

Here we found a boat waiting, into which we had to get, and to assist in placing the men and other contents of the wagon in her.

The boat pulled off to a ship lying some little distance out with her topsails loosed, and when we arrived alongside men and chests were hoisted in, and we scrambled up as well as we could.

Captain Haxell, as soon as the boat was clear, called to the mate to hoist the topsails, brace the yards abox, and weigh.

The orders and the noise seemed confusing enough to both Bill and me, and we were shoved and hustled about, and blamed for being useless, and also for being in the way ; but at last the ship was under way, and we were standing off the land with all sail set.

CHAPTER III.

ADrift.

THE night was cold and chill, and a drizzling rain was falling, which speedily wet us through, as Bill and I stood on the deck, not knowing where to go or what to do.

The drunken men and their chests were all taken down into the fore-castle ; but when we attempted to follow, we were told to stay on deck and do our work, though what that work was proved a mystery to us.

Seeing men coiling up ropes and hanging them on to belaying pins, we tried to do the same, but only got cuffs and blows for doing it wrong ; so we sheltered ourselves under the long-boat, thinking that if this was going to sea, it would have been much better to have remained in the workhouse to become a carpenter and a shoemaker.

Here we cowered away during the long and dreary night, and to add to our discomfort, the ship being close to the wind, bobbing into a choppy head-sea, we became dreadfully seasick.

At last daylight came, and we were found and routed out of our refuge, and brought before the mate who had the morning watch.

"Hallo! Who are you, and where did you come from?" he shouted.

We stood sillily before him, and answered, "Please, sir, we're the two apprentices Captain Haxell brought off last night."

"Apprentices! I never heard of our old man having apprentices before; but where's your kit, and the rest?"

"Kit, sir—what's that?"

"Your chests, beds, clothes, you greenhorns."

"Please, sir, we've only what we've got on."

"Well, I don't know what to do. I'll see the captain when he comes on deck. Here, what are your names?"

When we told him, the mate said: "Well, Hawse, you are starboard watch; and, Seaman, you are port watch. Hawse, your watch below; Seaman, on deck."

All this was Greek to us, but one of the men, in obedience to the mate, put a swab into Bill's hand, and told him to dry the deck, while I was left alone. I was standing amidships, wondering at what was going on and what would become of us, when I felt a hand laid on my shoulder, and a voice, the first with a tone of kindness in it that I had heard on board, saying, "What cheer, shipmate?"

Looking round, I saw a boy with a good-humoured smile on his face.

"Oh," I said, "what am I to do, and where can I go?"

"Why, you must do what you're told. Did you stowaway on board in dock?"

"Not I. I and Bill there," pointing to him, "are apprentices, and came on board last night with the captain."

"Apprentices are you? Where are your chests and hammocks? Got nothing but what you stand up in? You're funny 'prentices, and I don't think the old man is likely to have 'prentices bound to him, from what I can see since I've been aboard of the hooker."

When I explained to the speaker, who told me his name was Tom Arbor, and that he had shipped two days before the ship sailed, how we had come aboard, he laughed heartily, and said, "You're no 'prentices. The old man maybe wanted boys for something or other, and he took you. Never mind, I'll do what I can for you both."

Our conversation was interrupted by the captain coming on deck, and calling for us. "Now, my brave sailor-boys, how d'ye-like the sea?"

Captain Haxell, as he spoke, looked even more like a bird of prey than he had the day before, and though his words were cheery, there was something in the way he said them which chilled us with fear.

I, however, plucked up courage, and asked where we were to live, and for some dry clothes.

"Clothes, you workhouse brats; let them dry on you. Now you've got to work before you eat. Here," catching hold of me by the ear, "you go to the steward, and say he said he wanted a boy, and I've got him one; and you"—to Bill—"go to the cook for his mate."

We were told off thus roughly to our duties, and forewarned that those under whom we had to work were worse tyrants than any we had had to do with in the workhouse, but that they were kindness itself when compared with the captain and mate.

Indeed from no one on board did we receive any kindness, except from Tom Arbor, and he himself had to undergo much ill-treatment. We often longed to be back at the workhouse again, for there we were sure of our night's rest, and of sufficient food, while if we were treated severely, we had not to suffer from actual cruelty.

After leaving England we were at sea four or five months, and had during the latter part to suffer from thirst; for our supply of water was but scanty, and Bill and I were always the last served, and sometimes had to go without.

Notwithstanding rough treatment and thirst, we were fortunate enough to keep our health; and when we first anchored, which was at one of the coral islands in the Pacific, we were so delighted with all

that we saw of scenery and people—all was so strange, new, and wonderful—that we thought little of the pains and hardships we had undergone.

Soon, however, we found that even delightful scenery and climate do not make up all that is necessary for enjoyment, and that sailing among lovely islands, especially when one never has a chance of putting a foot ashore, is but a poor compensation for blows and ill-treatment.

We soon found that Captain Haxell traded with the people of the islands on very peculiar principles. Indeed, often many of his acts were sheer robbery and piracy, and though often Tom Arbor consulted with Bill Seaman and myself as to the possibility of running away, we were afraid to trust ourselves among the natives, lest they should avenge upon us the wrongs they received at the hands of our shipmates.

So matters went on, until the day when this story commences. Certainly we had learned some amount of seamanship, and were better able to look after ourselves than when we had left England; but I hope and trust that it may never again fall to the lot of English boys to undergo such ill-treatment as we constantly received. One comfort we had, and one alone, and that was that Tom Arbor had been religiously brought up, and taught where to look for consolation, and showed us how the Christianity we had heard of in the workhouse was a real and

beautiful thing, instead of, as we had regarded it, simply one of the subjects of the workhouse school.

As soon as we found that there was no ship in sight, Tom proposed that we should pray for help and guidance, and if our prayers were offered up in rough and untutored language, they were as true and fervent as most that are made in church.

When our prayers were finished, we began to overhaul the boat, to find what we had aboard of her. Fortunately she had constantly been employed in trading, and her trade-box, arms, and all other gear belonging to her were on board, except the oars, which had unfortunately been taken out, just before we were sent in chase of the turtle, to be overhauled, and only the three spoken of above had been passed into her before the boat was lowered, and of these three, as will now be remembered, only one remained.

We found we had the mainmast and a dipping lug, as well as a small triangular mizzen, and we at once shipped the masts, and made sail to a light breeze from the westward; and then, with Bill Seaman steering, Tom Arbor and I opened the trade-box. On the lid we found a sheet of paper, on which was written the contents, which mainly consisted of gaudy beads, brass wire, flints and steels, small hatchets and knives, and also a book, in which had been entered what had been expended, and how much had been replaced, and in which there were many blank sheets.

There was also a bottle of ink and a pen, so Tom said we could keep a log of our proceedings.

When we found that the list and trade-book agreed with the contents of the chest, we looked to see what were in the lockers, which were fitted under the stern sheets; and in them we found about four pounds of pigtail tobacco—which, as none of us had ever taken to smoking, we determined to keep for trade, knowing how fond the natives were of it—six and a half ship biscuits, a piece of boiled salt pork weighing about a pound, a bottle of rum, two cooked yams, two pistols, a large packet of ammunition, some gun flints, a flask of priming powder, a bag with needles and thread, and some tin plates, pannikins, and spoons.

Lashed under the thwarts were four muskets in tarpaulin covers, and there were three small beakers or casks, one of which was half full of fresh water, a couple of balls of spun yarn, two fishing-lines and hooks, and a lead and line.

When we had completed our search, Tom said, "Well, my boys, we may be thankful to have so much. Many a poor fellow has been adrift in a boat without bite or sup, while what we have here, with these two turtles, may last us some days; and before it is all finished, we may fall in with an island or a ship."

Bill and I said we were both hungry and thirsty, and proposed to make a meal off the pork and biscuits; but Tom said that they would keep, and that we had better kill one of the turtles and live on its flesh.

One was accordingly killed and cut up by Tom, and he gave us each a piece of flesh to eat; but hungry as we were we could not stomach the idea of eating it raw, and so we all began to cast about for some means of cooking our ration.

We had means of making fire, and the bottom boards would supply us with fuel, but what were we to use as a stove or fireplace? This puzzled us for some time, but at last a bright idea entered into my head. "Why couldn't we fill the shell of the turtle with water, and out of the hoops of the bucket make a grating on which we could light a fire?"

"That may be," said Tom; "but suppose we want the bucket for bailing again? That won't do."

"But let us look again in the trade-box. Perhaps there may be something there," I answered.

"I have it," said Bill. "I quite forgot; but I remember a day or two ago I was told to put some old cask hoops in the boat, and they are under the head sheets."

Looking where he said, we found the hoops he mentioned, and before long we made a sort of fireplace, which we stood in the turtle shell, and splitting up one of the bottom boards with our knives we made a fire, over which we after a fashion cooked our turtle meat, which we washed down with a pannikin of water.

When we had finished our meal, Tom said, "Now we had best try to make some sort of paddles.

There's the loom of the broken oar and the boathook. If we fix some of the bottom boards across them, they will answer until we can arrange something better."

No sooner said than done; and I, as carpenter, managed by dint of hard work before the night fell to fashion a couple of paddles, which if somewhat clumsy were at all events better than nothing. Whilst I was employed about this, Tom and Bill had taken turns in steering, and in cutting up the turtle, the second of which was also killed and cut into thin strips, which they hung on a piece of spun yarn stretched between the two masts; and when that was finished, they had cleaned the muskets and seen that they were fit for use.

At sunset, Tom, who without any talk or election had been made our captain, said we had better lower our sail, as otherwise we might run by or upon land in the darkness, as many of the coral islands were but a few feet above the surface of the water, and only visible from the cocoanut palms growing on them.

We accordingly lowered the lug, leaving the mizzen set to keep us head to wind and sea, and arranging that we should watch in turns. The two who were watch below rolled themselves up in the sail, Bill remarking that it was better than the *Golden Fleece*, where at the best it was watch and watch, and often watch and watch on, whereas now we were in three watches.

The morning watch fell to my lot, and just before

the sun rose I saw away on the eastern horizon a line of spots which looked like the sails of ships, but which by this time I had learned were cocoanut palms on a coral island.

I instantly called my companions, and it being a dead calm, after we had made a breakfast, at which, as land was in sight, Tom allowed us half a biscuit apiece, we got out our paddles and commenced to pull in the direction in which I had seen the tops of the trees.

CHAPTER IV.

ON A CORAL ISLAND.

“**F**ORTUNATELY for us it is calm,” said Tom, when, after two or three hours’ paddling, Seaman and myself began to complain that the land seemed to remain as far away as ever. “Never mind; pull on my boys,” said Tom.

“Why so, Tom?” I asked.

“Can’t you see how as we’ve been having the south-east trades regular till about a week ago; and they may set in again at any time, and then instead of creeping toward land, we should be blown away to leeward?”

Certainly Tom Arbor was right, and that we might soon expect the trades to be blowing from their accustomed quarter was evident by the long swell which was rolling up from the south-east; and the idea of being blown away from the land, which was already in sight, was quite enough to make us toil away at our paddles without flagging or complaining.

When the sun was high over our heads at mid-day, we were obliged to stop for a short spell, and begged

for water ; and though Tom at first refused, as he said we were not yet on shore, after much begging he relented and gave us a half-pint pannikin full each.

Refreshed by this, we took to our paddling with renewed vigour, though we were somewhat dismayed to find that during our short rest we had drifted back a part of our hard-won distance.

“Never mind, my boys,” said ever-cheery Tom ; “pull away, and as we get closer we shall be protected by the island from the current.” And, as the event proved, his words were true, for after paddling for another hour and a half we came to a bit of broken water where the current, which was divided by the coral island, met again, after passing through which we found we made good progress, and at about half-past four we found ourselves close to the shore.

On the side we approached there was no surf, and we were able to beach the boat in safety, and carrying the anchor up we buried it in the ground, and securing the cable to it we were able to leave the boat safe.

We were glad indeed to find ourselves ashore, and went up to the cocoanut palms which we had seen to look for some fallen nuts, but our attention was soon drawn to the peculiarities of the place. The island was in the form of a circle, enclosing a lagoon about a mile and a half in diameter, while the width of the encircling reef, for it was little more, was not over a hundred and fifty yards. On the outside the

edges went sheer down, but inside they sloped away gradually, and on the weather or south-eastern side a heavy surf was breaking.

We soon found some cocoanuts, and hacking off the outside covering with a hatchet, we cut through the shell, and enjoyed a refreshing draught of the sweet, cool milk, and then splitting them open we ate the kernels.

Bill and I now proposed to take our belongings out of the boat, and make a tent out of the sail.

“Not so quick,” answered Tom. “I know all these reefs have an opening somewhere on the lee-side, through which the lagoon can be entered. Now I will take a musket and go one way, and you two take another and go the other way, and whichever finds an entrance will fire; and then we shall all come back to the boat, and bring her in.”

This was soon settled, and seeing that the boat was properly secured, we started off, Bill and I going towards the south, and Tom towards the north. Every step seemed to give new life to Bill and me; for we both agreed that to be on an uninhabited island was one of the most delightful things that could possibly happen, and that it was indeed a happy change after the cruel treatment to which we had been subjected on board the *Golden Fleece*. Along the sand ran multitudes of crabs, which, as we approached, dodged into their burrows, emerging again as soon as we had passed. Seaweeds of strange form

and colour were scattered about, and among the cocoa-nut palms were grasses and plants the like of which we had never seen before, while besides seabirds of many kinds we were delighted to see pigeons flying about, larger than those we are accustomed to in England, and of brighter plumage.

"I say, Sam Hawse," said Bill to me after we had been walking about a quarter of an hour, "this is a jolly place. See, there's a pigeon on that trunk. Give me the gun, and let's have a shot."

"No, no, Bill," I answered; "wait, for that would bring Tom running back to us, and I know he would be angry. Let's find the entrance if we can."

Scarcely were the words out of my mouth when we heard Tom Arbor's musket, and turning back we hurried towards the boat, which we reached just after he did.

"Bear a hand, my hearties," he cried, as soon as he saw us. "Look there to the westward; there's another of the same squalls as the one we lost the *Golden Fleece* in coming up; that's why the trades aren't blowing. We must get the boat inside before it comes, or she'll be knocked to pieces here."

No words on his part were necessary to make us hurry, for the whole western horizon was banked up with heavy clouds; and lifting the anchor we put it in the boat, and then launched her off the narrow beach.

We gave way with a will along the shore, and soon

came to the entrance which Tom had found, which was some thirty feet wide and ten deep.

"There are others farther on," said Tom, "so we must pull back some little way to get good shelter;" and finding, after pulling along on the inside for five minutes or so that the reef seemed higher there than elsewhere, we determined on landing.

Accordingly we put the boat ashore, and hauling her up as high as we could, we ran out the cable and made it fast round the stem of a cocoanut tree, and then began to make our preparations for the night.

"To-night," said Tom, "as there's no time to build a hut, we can use the sail for a tent; so, Bill, you bring it ashore, while Sam and I lash the mast to those two palms for a ridge pole."

The rising of the clouds warned us that we had no time to lose, so as quickly as we could we rigged up our tent and tied the sail down to small palm trees to prevent its being blown away; and then we brought our muskets, ammunition, and all other belongings, including the trade-box, up, and arranged them under its shelter, and Bill and I were soon quite delighted at the appearance of our little tent.

However, we had not much time for looking about, for the rain came down heavily on us, and was soon followed by a squall of wind, which levelled our tent with the ground, burying us under the folds of the wet canvas.

We scrambled out as quickly as we could, but such

was the fury of the blast that we could scarcely keep our feet, and we could hear the crash of falling palms all around us, while the feathery heads of those that stood could be seen waving wildly by the lurid light of the flashes of lightning, which were accompanied by peals of deafening thunder.

We did all we knew to prevent the sail being blown away, as once or twice seemed more than probable; for the wind, getting under a corner, lifted it up and almost tore it from our grasp. Indeed, we were dragged along by it for some little distance, when it came against a palm that stayed it, and soon the palm with the canvas wrapped around it fell, and effectually secured it.

Ere long a new terror was added to our situation, for by the glimpses given us of our island refuge by the lightning, we saw that the reef both to the right and left of us was entirely under water, and that the spot we had chosen for our camp seemed as if it might be submerged at any moment.

"The boat!" cried I; "let's get into her sooner than stay here to be drowned."

But that hope of refuge was cut off from us, for as we started towards her we saw her driven from her moorings and blown away towards the other side of the lagoon.

I know I lost heart, and began to wring my hands and to cry out that we should die, and Bill Seaman told me since that he was quite as frightened as I

was. Tom Arbor, however, kept his presence of mind, and said, "Don't be frightened, lads; the Lord, who preserved us in the boat and brought us here, will not desert us ashore. Let us pray to Him now."

Suiting his action to his words, Tom knelt down, and amid the driving rain and spray offered up a prayer, and Bill and I followed his example. The words may not have been according to formula, but I am sure they were meant reverently; and as if in answer to our prayer, the wind fell, and the rain ceased, and the stars shone brightly, while the water subsided from the surface of the reef.

We instantly set to work to look after our belongings, and found that the mast had been snapped in two and the sail torn, but that no real harm had happened to anything else.

We felt very cold and shivery, and Bill's teeth rattled like a pair of castanets, and he said, "I wish we could make a fire; but there's nothing to burn. Everything is soaking wet with the rain."

"Rain can't soak all the way through the husk of a cocoanut," said Tom, "and there are plenty of old ones about. Now set to work to look for them, while I find a hatchet to split them up."

We soon found not only a lot of nuts which were withered, and on being split open gave us lots of dry fibre, but also we found that many of the fronds which lay about had been so protected from the rain and spray by others that lay upon them that they

were fit for fuel; and from the net-like shield or spathe of the base of the fruit-stalk we easily made kindling; and not more than half an hour after the end of the storm we had a fire blazing brightly, and were broiling turtle steaks over it and drying our clothes, laughing and talking as if we had not just escaped from death by the fact of our having chosen a bit of reef a few feet higher than the rest for our camping-place.

After a time I said, "I wonder if this island has a name. I think we may as well give it one. What do you say to Ring Island? It is just in the form of one, and where we came in is like where the stone is set."

The other two laughed at me, and Tom said, "We want something more practical than a name; though, if you like, we will call it Ring Island. We have to think how we are to live, and how we are to get away; for I for one do not wish to stop for ever here."

"Certainly not," chimed in Bill and myself; "but what are your ideas?"

"I've had no time to think yet; but I have one, and that is that we had better go to sleep now, and then to-morrow we must explore the island, and see if we can find our boat or what remains of her."

Bill said he did not feel sleepy; but Tom argued that if we did not sleep now, we should want to sleep in the daytime, when we should be working, and that sleep we must in order to live.

We all laughed at this, and piling fuel on the fire we made ourselves a nest of dry leaves near it, and were soon all sound asleep.

I was awaked the next morning by Tom shaking me by the shoulder, and opening my eyes found it was broad daylight. Bill Seaman was sitting up yawning, and saying he did not think he had been to sleep at all.

"Nonsense," said Tom; "I've been up half an hour and got some breakfast ready. See here," and he pointed to a tin plate full of turtle steaks, which he had cooked. "Now make haste, both of you, and eat your breakfasts, and then we'll start off."

We needed no bidding to make us fall to; but when we came to drinking, I said, "It's all very well drinking cocoanut milk; but I think we may get tired of that, and the island does not seem big enough for a river."

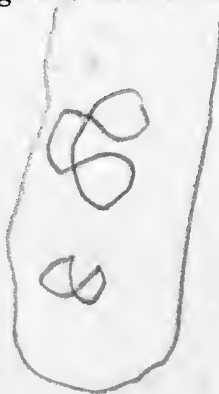
"I've been looking about," said Tom, "before I woke you, and close by I found some pools of rain-water; so we can fill our beakers and the trade-chest, for that's water-tight; and lest the water should dry up or leak away, we had better do so at once."

This was soon done, and then, having covered up all our belongings with leaves, we each took a musket and some cartridges, a cocoanut shell full of water to drink, and some turtle to eat, and set out on our journey of discovery.

As we left our camp we found that the cocoanut

palms had been levelled all along the reef, except where we had been, and on the side of the lagoon opposite; and we soon found that to get round the island by toiling through and across the prostrate trunks, which lay strewn in inextricable confusion, would be more than we could do in one or even two days.

How were we to manage to get round to the other side, was now a question to be solved; and after some consultation we determined to return to our camp and set to work to build some sort of raft or catamaran, in which we might navigate the lagoon enclosed by the reef, a proposition on Bill's part that we should wade and swim along the shore being decidedly negatived by the appearance of a huge, hungry-looking shark, that looked as if it would have been only too glad to make a meal off us.



CHAPTER V.

FISH-CURING.

ON leaving the camp we had kept along the centre of the reef, and, before deciding to return, we had examined both sides to see if by any means we might manage to continue our road along the narrow beach ; and in doing so we came upon pools of salt water which were literally alive with fish, and as we could see that the water was draining away through the sands, there could be little doubt that they would soon be left high and dry.

As soon as Tom Arbor saw them, he clapped his hands and said that here was a chance of laying in a good stock of provisions, and that it would be better to secure them before they went bad, and even before we thought of our catamaran.

We were puzzled as to how he meant us to proceed ; but he said he had been shipmates with a Yarmouth lad on a previous voyage, and he had told him how herrings were prepared by salt and smoking, and that, even if we had no salt, we could smoke a good many, and so provide ourselves with a stock which would

last us some time, and which would be a pleasant variety to the cocoanuts, which, so far as he saw, were the only vegetable products fit for food to be found.

We at once set to work at one pool and picked out a lot of fish, which we strung on our ramrods and carried back to camp with us. And after Tom had shown me and Bill how to clean and split them open, he set to work to prepare a number of thin, light rods out of the midribs of the leaves of the palms which had been blown down. On these he slipped the fish as soon as we had completed cleaning them, putting his rods in at one of the gills and out at the mouth of each of the fish; and when a rod was strung with fish about four inches apart, he put it on a couple of uprights planted in the ground, under which he lighted a fire, which he banked down with green leaves and damped cocoanut husks, so as to cause a dense smoke.

"There," he said—"that will do after a fashion; but at Yarmouth, I'm told, they have houses to keep the smoke in. And now you, Bill, had better make a basket out of some of these leaves, and go and get some more fish, while Sam and I set to work to rig up some sort of a hut for us.

I said, "Why should we have our hut here? Isn't the other side of the reef bigger? It looks so."

"Yes," he said; "but don't you see the palms over there waving in the breeze? It'll soon be down on us. And that must be the trades setting in again;

and they'll blow for months and months without taking off. It's only when there are storms for a time that they cease."

"Why's that, Tom?" I asked.

"I can't rightly tell the reason, but so it is; and while they're a-blowing there'll always be a big surf tumbling on that side. And if ever it happen that we see a ship, and have to get off to her, it'll be from this side that we shall have to make a start."

Tom now chose four palm trees which had not been blown down, and telling me to get a couple of axes from among our stores, he and I set to work to cut them off as high up as we could manage by standing on the top of our beakers and the trade-chest.

The four trees stood at the corners of a space about twelve feet long by eight wide, and would, he said, make the main posts of the hut we were to build; and before Bill came back with his load of fish two of them had been cut at a height of six feet from the ground.

When Bill came back, he said,—

"Didn't you say the Yarmouth folk used salt for their herrings?"

"Yes," answered Tom. "Why do you ask?"

"Why, because I've found some. There's a bit of rock stands up above the ground about a hundred yards away, and the top of it is fashioned like a basin, and in that there's a lot of salt, though it's wet now from last night's rain."

"That's good news, anyway. Do you just go and get some."

"All right!" answered Bill; and he soon returned with a couple of handkerchiefs filled with coarse, wet salt.

"Now, how do they put the salt into the fish and smoke 'em at the same time?" I asked. "We haven't a harness-tub to put 'em in."

"I don't rightly know," said Tom; "but I suppose if, when we've cleaned a fish out, we put some salt inside, and tie it up again with a strip of palm leaf before hanging it up to smoke, it'll answer pretty well."

We all now set to work cleaning the fish Bill had brought, and filled their insides with salt, and then hung them up as we had done the others; and when we had finished we found we had about forty unsalted and sixty salted, averaging over a pound weight each, most of them being a sort of rock cod.

With this Tom said we might be satisfied for the time, and that we should now get on with our hut as fast as we could.

The two remaining trees were soon cut, and just as I was going to jump down off the trade-chest, on which I had been standing (the trade winds had now reached our side of the reef), I saw something black floating in the middle of the lagoon, and looking steadily at it, I soon saw that it was our boat, but that from the way she was floating she must be half-full of water.

“Hurrah!” I cried, “hurrah!”

“What’s up, mate?” said both of my companions in a breath.

“Why, there’s our boat a-coming back to us of her own accord,” I answered, pointing her out.

“That’s a providence,” said Tom. “We must keep an eye on her, that she don’t get drifted out through one of the entrances. Now, then, one must keep a watch on her; and as ’twas you, Sam, as first saw her, you do so. But you can keep your hands employed in making sinnet for lashings for the house out of the palm leaves.”

I was soon busy making sinnet, and keeping an eye on the boat, while from the sound of the axes I could hear that Tom and Bill were busy.

The boat drifted pretty rapidly across the lagoon, and seemed to be coming straight towards us until she came to within about two hundred yards of the shore, when she altered her direction and began to move quickly towards the entrance by which we had got into the lagoon.

I had been desirous of securing her without saying a word to my companions, but now I feared that I should be unable to do so, and called to them to come to my assistance. Seaman at once proposed to swim off to her, but Tom Arbor would not allow him, for fear of sharks, and said we had best go to the opening by which we had entered the lagoon, for she would be sure to drift there.

He was not mistaken, for she grounded just at the inner end, and we were able to secure her without any risk, and tow her back to where our camp was.

"Now, lads," said Tom, "we had better bail her out and haul her up on shore."

We set to work to bail her out, but soon found that she leaked so much that it was hopeless to attempt it.

"She's no use as she is," I said. "We must get her up ashore and see what we can do to her."

"That's all very well, but how can we haul her up full of water?" answered both Bill and Tom in a breath.

"Why, where water comes in, it must be able to go out; and every bit we raise her out of the water, she will empty herself."

"True; but we're not strong enough to haul her up the weight she is now."

"I have it!" I cried, after thinking a minute or two. "Let's put a palm trunk against two of the uprights of the house, and bringing the cable to it, rig a Spanish windlass. And some of those small palms I see you've been cutting for ridge-poles and rafters will do for handspikes and rollers."

My proposal was hailed with delight, and from the small palms, which were not more than three or four inches in diameter, we soon cut some levers and rollers, and essayed to heave the boat up. We found, however, that our utmost efforts would not move the

boat when she was once solidly aground, and that, heave as we might, we only buried her bows in the sand.

After wasting our strength for about a quarter of an hour, we stopped to regain our breath, and walking down to the boat, Tom said he would pass the cable round her outside, so as not to bury her; and this being done we gave another heave, but with no better results than before.

"Seems to me," I said, "these handspikes are too short."

"That may be," answered Tom, "but how are we to reach the tops of longer ones?"

"Why not bend the leadline or boat's sheet on?" said Bill.

"Better still," I answered. "We have the blocks of the sheet and halyards. We can reeve a jigger, and make it fast to the top of our lever, and the other end we'll bring down to that palm there."

This at last answered, and with each shift of our tackle we were able to haul the boat up about six inches, and in little more than an hour we had got her half out of the water, and altogether on rollers, and found that the water that remained in her no longer ran out. So we set to work and bailed her out, and then she was so much lighter that we were able to dispense with our purchase and long levers and use our short ones again, and before another hour was past we had her high and dry on the beach.

We now left her and set to work about our hut again, and lashing small palm trunks to the four corner-posts, we had the frame of our shanty pretty well up before the sinking of the sun warned us that it was time to prepare for the night.

We spread the torn sail over the weather side to protect us from the wind, and Bill went to the nearest pool to get some fresh fish for our supper, for we would not touch those we had put to smoke; and they were soon grilling on the embers, and furnished us with a capital meal, which we washed down with cocoanut milk.

Supper finished, we made our beds of leaves, and laid us down to sleep, thoroughly tired with our day's work; but first of all Tom proposed that we should have prayers, and return thanks to God for the mercies shown to us; and this good custom once established, we never departed from it.

When we woke in the morning, Tom and Bill said they would thatch our hut, and that I, as the carpenter of the party, should examine the boat and see what I could do to repair her.

At first sight my task seemed nearly hopeless, for many of her planks were split, and her seams were open and gaping over all the fore part of her, and I had neither nails nor planks with which to mend her.

CHAPTER VI.

A VOYAGE OF EXPLORATION.

TOM and Bill went on with the hut, and rapidly thatched the roof and weather side, while I was trying, with the fibre of the husks of cocoanuts, to calk the seams and splits in the boat; but I found that instead of doing good I only did harm, for as I forced my extemporized oakum into the openings they gaped wider and wider, and I had to come to the conclusion that to repair a clincher-built boat by calking was beyond my power.

I came up to where my companions were at work, and told them of my failure, and said,—

“I’m afraid I can do nothing to the boat. I only make the leaks worse by calking.”

“Don’t be down-hearted, mate. We’ll have a look at her, and see if we can’t figure out a way to make her sea-worthy, for I don’t intend to live on this island all my days,” said Tom. “Now it’s about time to knock off work for an hour or so, and after we’ve had some food, we’ll all set to work to thatch the hut and have it finished before night.”

Accordingly we knocked off work, and while Bill went to get some fresh fish from a pool, Tom and I went to make up the fire by which we were smoking those we had prepared the day before.

In doing this we found that some coral and shells, which had been mixed up with the fuel, had been burnt, and when we touched it, it fell to pieces.

"Why, it's lime," said Tom. "Now that gives me an idea. In India and China I've seen lime and oil used for calking instead of pitch, and we'll plaster the boat inside with the mixture, so as to keep out the water."

"That's very well," I said, "but where's the oil to come from?"

"Why, out of the cocoanuts. You know all the copra, as they call it, which we shipped in the *Golden Fleece* is only dried cocoanut kernels, and all they use it for is to make oil."

"Well, then, but we can't get the oakum to hold in the boat, and all your oily mortar will crack out."

"No doubt we'll find a way. But come now, Bill has dinner ready, and after dinner we'll finish the hut, and I daresay before long we'll think of a way to patch the boat."

That evening saw our hut, as far as the outside was concerned, pretty well finished, and we were able to sleep in it comfortably and warmly. Next morning, when Bill went to fetch our fish for breakfast, he brought back the unpleasant news that several of the

pools were dry, and the fish dead and beginning to smell most unpleasantly.

"Well," said Tom, "we must clear them out, or we shall be killed by the smell. We shall have a regular pestilence. After breakfast we must set about that before anything else."

We set out accordingly as soon as we could, and found that what Bill had said was only too true, and a most unpleasant day's work we had throwing the dead fish into the sea; and we found that even in the pools where some water remained it was sinking so rapidly that the fish in them would soon die also.

As we sat round our fire that night, we were speaking of the necessity of going on with this disagreeable work, when Bill said, "Anyway, we might make a pond here of coral rocks, which would keep a good many in."

"That's right, Bill," I answered. "Don't you think so, Tom?"

"Surely; and we can't do better than go on with it in the morning."

Next morning, as soon as it was light, we set about looking for a spot where we could keep our fish, and before long we lighted on a small creek about twenty feet long by ten wide at the entrance, and in which the water was about six feet deep.

To close up the entrance with a pile of coral blocks thrown together loosely was not a difficult matter, and during the whole of the next week we

were busy doing this and filling the pond or stew with live fish, salting and smoking others, and finishing our house, to which we contrived a door and windows, closed with frames made of the midribs of the palm leaves, on which were worked a matting of the fronds.

Our beds we made of the husks of dry cocoanuts, which we pounded with stones to loosen the fibre; and from the shells of the nuts we fashioned a number of utensils which we added to our scanty stock.

When this work was all finished, I asked Tom Arbor if he had thought of any means of repairing our boat, and he said "Yes," and that now we could set about it as soon as we liked.

His plan, when he described it, was to make a coating all over the inside of the boat below the thwarts of cocoanut fibre mixed with lime and oil, and to keep it in its place by an inner lining of planks fashioned out of the trunks of the palms.

This idea seemed capital, and we had now to provide means for carrying it out.

During the whole time we had been drying our fish, of which we now had some two hundred pounds well cured and salted, and which, we found, made a pleasant change from those we took out of our stew, we had mixed coral and shells with the fuel, and had now a good stock of lime. The oakum from the husks of the cocoanuts we could easily make—indeed,

by this time we had become so expert in preparing it that ambitious ideas of rope-making had entered our heads; but to secure the inner lining, and to provide the necessary oil for our cement, was a more difficult business.

We tried boiling bits of the copra, or dried kernel, in our pannikins, and soaking pieces in the shells of the turtles, which we had carefully preserved, but with but little success. Next we made a rude mortar by chopping a square hole in the side of a prostrate palm and pounding the copra in it; but the fibrous wood soaked up the oil as quickly as we pounded it out.

"Come, now, let's put our considering-caps on again, and see what we can do," said Tom.

At last I said,—

"I have it! Let's make a square box, and plaster it inside with lime, and then fill it with the copra chopped as fine as we can in bags of palm leaves, and then squeeze it with a lever and purchase in the same way as we got the boat up, and let the oil run into the turtle shell and any empty cocoanuts we can muster."

After several attempts, which were more or less unsuccessful, we managed to rig up a sort of press; and at the end of a fortnight we had enough oil for our purpose, and then set to work to split our planks for the lining. This was easy enough, as the trunks of the trees were easily divided; but when we had

all our material ready, the question of securing the lining had to be faced.

From the bottom boards and stern and head sheets, which we had to take up to do our work thoroughly, we managed to get a good many nails, and out of the wood we made strips to run athwart ships over our planks of cocoanut; and these strips we shaved and nailed down in their places, and so at last managed to get the boat water-tight, and, as Tom said, much stronger, in case she ran on a rock, than she had ever been before.

"Now," he said, "we will go for a voyage to the other side of the island; but first we will paint her over outside with lime and oil, so that the weeds won't grow on her."

This did not take us long, and when we had finished we launched her, and found to our delight that she was perfectly stanch; but when she was in the water, we found that we had put so much extra weight in her that she floated dangerously low.

"Oh," said Tom, "that won't do; if she shipped a sea now she would go down like a stone."

"But, anyway, we can go to the other side of the lagoon, for there must be some pigeons there. We saw some the first day, and none have come near our hut, and I'm tired of fish and cocoanuts," said Bill.

"No, I won't run any risk," said Tom. "I'll deck her right in, except a well for our stores, and we can

raise on her gunwale with a couple of good strakes of palm."

"More work!" I answered. "And where are the nails to come from?"

"No nails wanted. We'll lace 'em on India fashion," said Tom, "and put a couple of half trunks round her as fenders."

"That's work enough, Tom. However, as you say it, done it must be; but I hope you'll remember the carpenter."

Tom laughed, and said it was but to be on the safe side, and that he intended to have the boat sea-worthy.

We got the boat moored in a little creek like that we had made into our fish pond, and for the next three days we were very busy with her, and got a strake of cocoanut plank about eight inches wide round her fore and aft.

When this was done, Bill and I at last prevailed on Tom to make the voyage to the weather side of the lagoon to see what might be found there.

Bill and I flew for our paddles as soon as Tom assented to our wish, and taking with us some smoked fish and a dozen of green cocoanuts to drink on our way, we started off, Bill and I paddling, while Tom was busy in the stern hammering and chopping at something which, as to paddle we faced forward, we could not see.

"What are you making all that row about, Tom, old man?" asked Bill.

"Never you mind. You'll see in good time," he answered.

"Oh!" I cried; "Tom has an old head on young shoulders. I wonder his hair ain't grey. He's doing something good, you may be sure."

When we left off paddling once or twice to open a cocoanut and drink its juice, Tom hid what he had been doing from us, and it was not until we landed on the weather part of the reef that we found what he had been doing, when he proudly loaded a musket he had brought with him with slugs, and firing, knocked over a couple of green pigeons.

Bill was so delighted with this that he begged to be allowed to pluck and cook them at once, saying he cared more for a roast pigeon than for all the discoveries we were going to make.

Leaving him intent on his culinary labours, Tom and I pushed on through the cocoanut trees, and after walking some fifty yards we came to a small mound or protuberance of a different sort of rock from the coral of which the rest of the island was composed, and from this gushed forth, more precious in our eyes than a gold mine or all the diamonds of Golconda, a tiny rill of crystal-bright water.

We both saw it at the same moment, and, rushing forward, drank, and bathed our hands and faces, and set up a great shout to call Bill to come to us.

So absorbed were we in the delight of finding this spring—for we had not the slightest hope of finding

one on this reef—that it was not till after Bill, attracted by our shouts, had come up to us that we noticed the signs of man's handiwork close to the spring.

On the ground we saw lying some troughs made of hollowed palm trunks, which had evidently once conveyed the waters of the spring to some place where they were required.

"Let us follow up these," I said. "We may find something of use."

"Not much likelihood," said Tom. "Some poor shipwrecked man made these, and they have evidently not been used for years. He has either died or else got away."

"Anyway, we can but look to see how he lived, and we may find something that will be of use," I answered.

"Of course," replied Tom; "we've come over to see the whole place, and we will look carefully about for anything that may be of use, only don't raise your hopes."

Hardly had he spoken when we heard the crowing of a cock.

"Hark!" cried Bill; "there's fowls. There may be some one alive yet. Come along."

We all pushed forward in the direction of the sound, and soon came upon a space which had once been cleared, but was now all covered with undergrowth, and in the midst of which stood a hut, the

walls of which, being built of logs cut from the palms, still remained, but the thatched roof had fallen in.

Towards this we pushed our way, disturbing, as we did, several fowls, and noticing that among the tangled undergrowth there grew a good quantity of maize, and that evidently at one time this space had been cultivated.

Up the walls of the hut grew creepers, and the holes which had served as door and windows were thickly matted with them, so that we had to cut them away in order to effect an entrance.

CHAPTER VII.

BILL MAKES A DISCOVERY.

WHEN we got inside we could at first see but little, for the thatched roof, which had fallen in, had buried everything with a dusty brown covering; so we set to work to clear this out, and see if it hid anything that might be of value to us.

In one corner there was apparently a mound of these half-decayed leaves, and we decided on commencing our work there; but judge of our horror when, after removing a few armfuls, we came upon the skull of a man, and then proceeding more carefully and reverently, we uncovered a skeleton lying on a sort of bed-place, wrapped in blankets, which crumbled to dust as we touched them.

"Poor fellow," said Tom; "he must have died here alone, with none to bury him. Let us do it now."

Both Bill and I agreed with this, for we were too frightened by these poor remains of mortality to go on with our search, and we gladly set to work to clear away a space where with our knives and hatchets we could dig a grave.

While we were thus occupied, Tom made a sort of mat of plaited palm leaves, in which he carefully put the skeleton, and lashed it all up with sinnet.

"I wonder who or what he was," he said, as he came bearing his sad burden to where Bill and I were at work, and had by this time dug the grave to a depth of about three feet.

"That will do," said Tom; "now get some palm leaves, and line the whole."

As soon as we had done this, we reverently laid the bundle containing the skeleton in the grave, and covered it in, and then at Tom's suggestion we knelt down and said the Lord's Prayer.

By this time it was getting on toward sunset, and it was necessary to prepare for our night's lodging. While Tom went to see the boat properly secured, I made a fire, and Bill acted as cook; and as in looking about for fuel I had come upon a nest of eggs, we promised ourselves a feast, and glad indeed were we to wash down the eggs with sweet, fresh water, and to add to our meal some heads of Indian corn roasted in the ashes.

Next morning before daylight Tom woke Bill and me, and said, "Now be quiet and come with me. I have marked where the fowls roost, and if we come on them softly, we may secure some before they wake."

Softly and stealthily we stole to the place Tom showed us, and there we found the remains of a shed,

under which there were a series of perches on which some thirty or forty fowls were roosting.

As quietly as we could we seized on them, and tied their legs together; but before we had secured more than a dozen, the rest were alarmed and made their escape.

"Never mind, lads," said Tom; "we'll get the others another night. And now, when we have had breakfast, we will go on with the examination of the hut."

It did not take us long to clear out the remainder of the thatch, and we soon found that the hut had been built with great care and ingenuity.

The bed-place on which we had found the skeleton occupied one corner, and under it was a seaman's chest, in which we found some carefully-patched clothes, and the tattered remains of a Bible, and the fragments of a chart.

No name or anything to give a clue to their owner was to be found, except that on the horn handle of a clasp-knife were cut "Jack" and a couple of crosses. We also found a sailor's ditty-bag, containing needles and thread, palm for sewing, beeswax, and buttons.

Tom said he was glad indeed to find the Bible, for now he said we should be able to read a chapter every night when we said our prayers; and the chart he carefully examined to see if it might give a clue to our whereabouts, and tell us if any inhabited islands existed within a distance which we might reach in safety in our boat.

On the chart there was a cross made with a bit of charcoal, and from it were drawn a series of lines in various directions, as if the unhappy man whose remains we had buried had pored over it for many a weary hour, and attempted to calculate some means of escape from his solitary island home.

"Curious!" I said. "He must have tried to make a boat or something. But see, there are a lot of islands away to the westward of that cross, which I suppose means this island; I should think he might have tried for them."

"Wait a bit, mates," said Tom; "we'll find out more soon."

And proceeding with our search in the middle of the room, we found a table, which had fallen to the ground, made of some pieces of wood which had evidently belonged to the companion of a ship, and stools of the same material.

On the table we found written in charcoal letters, which could scarcely be deciphered:—

".....cowar-s.....left alone.....no hope.....ill
.....heart-broken.....money."

What this meant we soon understood, all except the last. The man we had buried had been deserted by his companions; but what was meant by money we could not understand. Perhaps they had had money on the island, and quarrelled about its division.

This we put carefully on one side, and then, proceeding with our search, we found a fireplace made

of wood, plastered with lime, and full of wood-ashes, and on it were an iron pot and a frying-pan.

Scattered about we found cups made out of cocoanut shells, and a couple of plates, which had been broken and cleverly cemented with lime on to bits of wood.

"Evidently he did not die of starvation," said Tom, "for he had fowls, cocoanuts, and Indian corn; but now let us see what else there is on the island, for I think we have pretty well seen everything in the hut."

Leaving the hut, we passed through the clearing, and then through some more palm trees, and soon emerged on the weather side of the island, on which the surf was beating with relentless fury.

Here, half buried in sand or hidden by vegetation, we found scattered about the wreckage of a schooner of about two hundred tons, which must have been run plump on to the island.

Close to the beach we found another small hut, inside which were stowed canvas, carpenter's tools, and cordage; and close by we could see several pieces of wood from the wreck, which had evidently been fashioned into parts of a boat, and a pile of planks from the deck of the ship, as well as several others of her belongings, all covered over with the remnants of palm-thatching.

Whoever he was, the man had been trying to build a boat.

"I wonder what prevented him," said Bill.

"What's that sticking up there?" I asked, pointing to a piece of wood among the undergrowth.

"Why, the handle of an adze," answered Tom.

Looking at this, we soon found the reason why the unfortunate man had desisted from his work, and probably the cause of his death.

The rusty iron of the adze had stuck deep in a plank, and lying by it were some small bones, which it did not need any knowledge of anatomy to see belonged to a human foot.

Evidently the unfortunate creature had chopped off a part of his foot while engaged in fashioning a piece of wood, and had managed to get back to his hut to die.

"Poor fellow," said Bill and I in a breath; "he never could have built a craft here, and launched her through that surf."

"No," answered thoughtful Tom Arbor, "but he may have intended to build her on the other side, and only shaped the parts here, so as to have less weight to carry or drag across; but, anyway, his death is our good fortune, for we can deck and rig our boat for sea-going from what is here. If I mistake not we need it, for there's never an island on that chart within three hundred miles of us; and if there are any nearer, they're likely but places like this, with ne'er a living soul aboard of them."

"Well, what do you intend to do?" I asked.

"Why, rig up this hut again, and then get all our

belongings over to this side ; and then deck our boat, and rig her with something easier to handle than a dipping lug."

"All right ; but now we must look after the fowls we caught ; they'll be hungry and thirsty."

We soon made our way back to the hut ; and as many of its rafters were still sound, it did not take us very long to put a roof on that would keep out the sun and all ordinary rain. Bill was off to make a coop for the fowls that we had caught.

This done, we set steadily to work, and after getting all the things that we had left at our first camp to this place, where we were blessed with water, we again hove our boat up on shore ; and now, having wood and materials, Tom and I laboured to make a real trustworthy craft, while Bill was told off to look after the fowls, and remove the undergrowth from the clearing, being careful not to injure the maize, which we trusted would furnish us with a supply of food for our intended voyage.

First of all, Tom and I made a deep false keel to our craft, which we named the *Escape* ; and as we could not through bolt it to the keel, we put planks on either side of keel and false keel, and overlapping both, and nailed all solidly together.

This being done, we fixed a head knee in a similar manner ; and then having given the *Escape* a thorough good coating of lime and oil, we launched her again, lest she should get too heavy for us to manage.

This naturally had taken us some days, and Tom and I had laboured from morning to night at her, only coming to the hut for meals, which Bill had always ready for us.

Bill, the evening that we had got the *Escape* afloat, said, "You two fellows must think me a precious lazy hound not to come and help you more than I have. Now the boat's afloat, I want you to come with me to-morrow to see what I have been doing."

"Why, catching fowls, clearing out the water-troughs, making up the pool they lead into afresh, and all manner of things," I said.

"That's not all. I have had time to hunt about, and if you'll come with me to-morrow, I'll show you something."

"Shall we, Tom?" I asked. "I want to think about our ship before we go on with her."

"Perhaps one day won't matter. What is it you've found, Bill?"

"Never you mind until I show it you."

It was accordingly agreed that we should the next morning go and see what Bill had to show, and not to ask him to say what it was beforehand.

Early in the morning Bill woke us, and gave us a good breakfast of eggs, roast maize, and a grilled fowl; and when we had finished he said, "Come along, and see what I have to show you."

First he took us to the spring, and showed us how he had patched up the troughs, cleared out a basin,

and lined it with turtle shells, into which the water fell, and which was large enough to take a bath in. Here we all enjoyed a thorough good wash, and sat in turn under the end of the trough from which the water fell into the basin.

Bill soon got tired of being here, and said, "If I'd thought that you would have been so long here, I'd have brought you here last night; now bear a hand, and come on."

Getting out of the water, we dried ourselves with cocoanut fibre, and putting on our clothes we went on with Bill a short way, until he brought us to a shed he had made for the fowls, which he had enclosed with leaf mats; and here he said he had all the fowls on the island except two or three, and that some hens were laying regularly, while others were sitting on their eggs.

"Certain you're a regular farmer," said Tom.

"Wait a bit; I'll show you if I'm a farmer. Come along here a bit farther." And following him along, he brought us to a clearing about twice as large as that where our hut stood, and which, like it, had been at one time planted with maize; but here the maize had been stronger than the weeds, and Bill having torn up all the latter, there was to be seen enough Indian corn, nearly ripe, to have loaded the *Escape* twice over.

"Well, you are a farmer, surely!" exclaimed both Tom and myself.

"You may say that, but you haven't seen all yet."

"What! Not yet?"

"Not by a long chalk. I think the fellow whose hut we have lived up there by himself, and the others down here. Come along, and I'll show you some more good-luck."

"You see here," he said, when we had gone other three hundred yards; "the reef's cut nearly in two by the sea, and they've made a stiff fence right across. And, look; you see they've brought the water right down here too. Now over this fence there's three or four huts, or what was huts; and what d'ye think there is there?"

"Sure we can't tell. Anything to say what the wreck was, or anything?"

"Not a word or a line, not a scrap of paper; but there's five graves, and there's been somewhere about eight or so got away."

"How do you know?" I asked.

"Why, by counting the bunks in the huts, to be sure. But, there; you won't guess what else there is. There's a turtle-pond, some half-dozen big turtles in it, and there's pigs."

"Pigs! Are you sure?" said Tom.

"Sure as eggs is eggs," answered Bill.

"Can we catch any?" I asked.

"I don't know," said Bill. "I daresay we can if we likes; but I seed some as fat as butter, and an old sow with a lot of young uns. But that ain't all; there's something else."

“What is it? Tell us at once.”

“Do you remember the writing on the table, and that we couldn’t find out what ‘money’ meant?”

“Certainly; but what’s that got to do with what you found?”

“Why, I’ve found the money, and a mighty lot there be, I can tell you. Gold guineas—thousands of them!”

CHAPTER VIII.

A NARROW ESCAPE.

“**N**ONSENSE, lad,” said Tom. “No craft that sailed these waters ever had thousands of guineas aboard of her, seeing as how there isn’t no use for money in these here parts. All the trade is with beads and iron and such like.”

“Maybe so; but the money’s here, and I found it. It seems as if the man who lived up in our hut, he were separated from his mates, and that he had the money one time.”

“How do you know that?” I asked.

“Why, it seems as if he had hidden it under the fireplace, for there’s a hole under it which would hold the box I’ve found down here; and that they who took it went off in a hurry—maybe saw a sail, and left him and the money behind.”

“Well, where is this money? Come along and let us see it.”

“Why, down in the biggest of them huts there, in a box tied up with cord; but it’s rotted, and the money tumbled out at the sides.”

We at once got over the fence, which we could easily see had been built to keep the pigs within bounds, and followed Bill to where there were standing the remains of some huts, which, as he said, had been cleared of what would give any clue as to who the occupants had been ; but there, under one of the bed-places, was the box, as Seaman had described it, wrapped up in a piece of sail-cloth, tied together with island-made string, and the coverings being more than half rotten, the contents had burst out, and partly rolled on the ground.

Curious, though the money was safe, and I am sure a roast sucking pig would have been of much more use to us than all the gold that ever was coined, it was to this money we first turned our attention, and agreed that nothing should be done until it was safely stowed away—money that had lain for years untouched and uncared for.

We pulled out the box, and emptied the coins still remaining in it into a heap on the ground, and added to them those which had fallen out, and to our eyes the pile of gold and silver seemed a mound of inexhaustible wealth.

However, we had divided the gold from the silver, and counted it out as nearly as we were able, for there were coins of various nations mixed up with the guineas of which Bill had spoken. We found that there was about twelve hundred pounds—a sum far larger than could have been ex-

pected to be found on board a trader in the South Seas.

As soon as we had counted out our money, we began to talk of how we could stow it away; and after much discussion we decided on carrying it to the hut where we were living, and putting it in the dead seaman's chest.

As we were on our way back with it, just before we came to the fence, we saw some of the pigs of which Bill had told us, and I managed to catch a little squeaker to carry it back for our dinner; but its cries alarmed the mother, who came after us in hot haste, and if we had not been on the fence when she came up she would doubtless have made us pay for kidnapping her offspring. As it was, she caught hold of my trousers in her mouth, and would have hauled me back on top of her if, luckily, they had not been rather rotten and given way, Mrs. Pig falling back with a piece of tarry trousers in her mouth, while I tumbled over on the other side of the fence, by no means sorry to get off so cheaply.

The pigling I had caught I had chucked over before, so all the efforts of the old sow to rescue her darling child from its fate were fruitless, and we soon had him stewing in the iron pot.

Whilst he was cooking, we spoke of the money we had found, and what we should do with it, and puzzled our heads to know where the schooner had come from, and what nation she belonged to.

We thought she was English by the Bible and chart, but the money puzzled us more than enough ; so at last we agreed not to bother ourselves about where it came from any more, and began to build castles in the air of buying or building a ship, of which Tom Arbor should be captain, and Bill Seaman and myself the two mates.

Whilst we were yarning away, Bill suddenly said, "I forgot something I found by the box the money was in. Look here !" and he pulled out of the breast of his shirt a small leather bag tied up carefully. "See," he said, as he undid it, and poured out the contents ; "there's a lot of pretty beads ; pity they haven't holes in 'em, or we might string 'em."

"Well, they are pretty," said both Tom and myself, as we eagerly bent over the little heap of shining balls ; "but 'tis a pity they're not of a size and true shaped. I suppose they're some of the beads the natives wouldn't have to do with. Never mind, we can keep them ; there were none like them among the trade aboard of the *Golden Fleece*."

The little bag had its contents restored to it, and was stowed away in the chest with our money, and we then all concluded it was time for bed.

By dint of hard work and manœuvring Tom and I, at the end of ten days more, had got our boat raised and decked forward and aft, leaving only an open space amidships in which we could lie down ; and in this we also built a cemented fireplace similar to the

one we had found in the dead man's hut. Outside the boat we had also fastened a great, bolster-like fender of cocoanut fibre, which we served over with string made of the same material, the whole being thoroughly soaked in a mixture of cocoanut oil and hog fat; for Bill, while we were acting as shipwrights, had been farming and hunting to make provision for our voyage, and as we said we wanted grease, he had boiled down the remains of two porkers, of which he had salted part to furnish us with meat.

The only question now remaining was to rig our little ship, and this gave rise to endless discussion. At first we decided on keeping her mizzen as it was, and altering the torn dipping lug into a jib and standing lug; but we soon saw that she was now so much deeper and heavier that this would scarcely move her except in very heavy weather.

After much trouble we managed, by fitting her with a bowsprit and using up all that was not rotten of the canvas we had found on the island, to give her a suit of sails for going on a wind, and made a huge mat of palm leaves for a square sail to be set in running.

All being completed, we packed on board under her fore and aft decks a stock of provisions, consisting of dried and salted pig, turtle flesh, smoked fish, and maize; while, besides our beakers, we had hundreds of cocoanut shells full of water, and on deck we had a coop of a dozen fowls.

All being prepared, our stock, according to our calculations, being enough to last us for at least a couple of months, we paddled the *Escape* out of the lagoon, and, making sail to a fresh trade wind which blew on our beam, we steered in the direction of the nearest island marked on the chart.

Though we had been now a long time on the island, and had found a refuge there from starvation or a still more dreadful death by thirst, we quitted it without regret, and launched forth on our voyage into the unknown.

As to setting our course, at first we had an idea by the sun by day, and we had learned aboard of the *Golden Fleece* that when the Southern Cross was vertical it was always due south; but I do not suppose we were ever accurate within two or three points either way of south-west, which we aimed at, and mostly by keeping the wind abeam.

The *Escape* made very good weather and steered easily, but, notwithstanding the size of her patchwork sails, she did not go fast through the water. "Never mind, lads," said Tom, when Bill and I complained of this; "it's better than a leaky corner of the forecastle of the *Fleece* to sleep in."

"Yes," I said, "and there ain't no mate to boot us or bos'n to rope's-end us here either."

"Ay, and more than that," cried Bill, who was superintending the boiling of our pot, in which was a piece of beautiful pork and some maize, "our tucker

here ain't mouldy, weevilly biscuit and salt junk that's more fit for sole leather than food for humans."

"Well done, cobbler," was our answer, and we put up patiently with the slowness of our progress when we considered how much better off we were than we had ever been aboard of the *Golden Fleece*.

The first day and night and all the next day passed away without our seeing anything save porpoises, which gambolled around, looking, as they always do to my mind, the happiest of created beings, flying-fish, and silver-winged gulls. But about the middle of the second night Bill, who had the watch, called out, "Rouse up, mates; whatever is that?"

Tom and I were awake in a second, and looking ahead as he told us, we saw a sight which all the fireworks ever made by the ingenuity of man could not have equalled. High up in the heavens, blotting out the stars, was a dense, black cloud, which seemed to be supported on a pillar or fountain of fire, and from the cloud were raining down masses of matter white-hot, red-hot. While we were looking, indeed before we had properly cleared our eyes of sleep, we heard a tremendous noise, louder than a thousand claps of thunder, and the breeze which had been carrying us steadily along suddenly ceased.

"Whatever can that be?" I cried. "A ship blown up?"

"A ship!" answered Tom. "No ship that ever floated could give a sight like that, nor a clap

neither. That's a burning mountain. I've heard as there be some in these parts."

Clap succeeded clap, but though all wonderful, none of them equalled in intensity of the sound the first one, while the fountain of fire leaped up and down in the most marvellous manner.

"Look out, boys; be smart and shorten sail," said Tom. "I've heard as how there be great waves after one of these blows-up, and we must keep our craft bows on if so be as we are not to be swamped."

Sail was shortened as quickly as we could, and our well covered over with the canvas to prevent us being swamped; and then Tom told us to lash ourselves to the deck, and get our paddles out, while he got the oar over the stern, so as to be ready to twist the boat in any direction.

Scarcely were we ready when we heard a low, moaning sound, and soon saw a wall of water of appalling height sweeping rapidly towards us. We worked frantically at oar and paddles, and fortunately it met us bows on; but so steep was the wave that we could not rise properly to it, and for what seemed an appalling time we were buried in the water. Would our boat free herself and rise again, or would she sink under the weight, and drag us down with her to the depths of the ocean?

Such were the thoughts which passed through my mind, and, I doubt not, through the minds of my companions; but they were answered by our emerging

from the wave with our gunwale broken, but otherwise uninjured. Our decks proved stanch, and though the weight of water had beaten the sails down into the well, which was full, the boat still floated.

"Quick! you two unlash yourselves, and bail for your lives, for there'll be some more of these waves, and if she meets them half water-logged as she is, down to Davy Jones's locker we go," cried Tom.

Bill and I did not need any second bidding to obey Tom's order, while he straightened the boat in the direction the wave had struck, and we bailed away for dear life.

Before we were half clear we heard the same sort of sound as had heralded the first wave, and again we were struck and half buried by the water; but the wave was not so high as the first, and we came through at the cost only of having to bail out more water.

Each successive wave, for there were a dozen, was smaller and smaller, and at last the sea became smooth again, and the trade winds blew once more; while from the burning mountain, instead of a fountain of fire and sparks, we could only see the rosy reflection of flames on rolling masses of white smoke.

We soon repaired our damage, and made sail with, as far as we could see, no real harm done save that the coop with our fowls in it had been washed away, and the wood we had for our fire was so damp that it would not light, and we had to make our breakfast of raw pork and uncooked Indian corn.

When the sun rose, we hung up our clothes to dry, and found that we could still see the column of smoke, though not the reflection of the flames.

Tom steered steadily for this smoke, and when we asked if we were not running into danger by steering for the volcano, he comforted us by saying that after such a blow-up as we'd seen there could be no other for some time; and, as he understood, these burning mountains were always in the centre of a group of islands, and we should be sure to find inhabitants, and maybe a schooner or ship trading for sandalwood, *bêche de mer*, and copra, in which we could get a passage to China, Australia, or New Zealand.

Though the trade winds blew fresh and the sun was shining, the whole air seemed to be full of a sort of brown haze; and we found that our decks, sails, clothes, hair, in fact everything, were covered with a fine, brown dust, which settled down on us, and in such quantities that we had to keep on shovelling it overboard or we should have sunk under its weight.

All day we sailed on in the direction of the smoke, and at night we again saw it lighted up by the reflection of the fire beneath. We were tired and weary, and though we took it in turns to steer and look out, the helmsman often found his head bobbing down on his chest. But in the middle of the night we were all frightened out of our sleepiness by the boat striking some hard substance.

"What's up?" cried Tom, as he came out of the

well, where he and I had been sleeping. "What have you run into, Bill?"

Bill was as much startled as we were, and as the bumps were repeated, we concluded it would be best to shorten sail and wait for daylight, though we at once sounded, in case we might be near any land, but found no bottom, though we bent every available bit of rope on to our leadline.

When the sun rose we saw a strange sight indeed, for the whole surface of the sea was covered with floating masses of stone, through which we had to make our way, two of us standing in the bow to fend off the lumps as we got close to them.

"Well, in all my born days I never sailed a boat among a lot of paving-stones 'afore," said Tom. "I suppose they was blowed up out of the mountain."

This made us laugh, but the work of shoving off the floating pumice stone from the boat was very severe, and we had several times to shorten sail while we rested from the labour; but by the middle of the afternoon the pieces began to get fewer and fewer, and before sunset the surface of the sea was clear of them, and we could steer our course without let or hindrance.

In the middle watch, under the smoke, I saw (it was my watch) what looked like a black mass streaked with threads of fiery gold. And when I was relieved by Tom, he told me that that must be the side of the fiery mountain; and sure enough when I

awoke after daylight, there, right ahead of us, towered a great mountain out of the sea, crowned by a mass of smoke.

Near the top the mountain was black and bare, but lower down its sides were clothed with forests, through which the liquid fire poured out of the crater had cut broad gashes.

Tom, who was steering, was heading away so as to pass to the north of the island, which we were rapidly doing; and Bill was lacing some palm-leaf mats together to set as a square-sail, a task in which I at once joined him.

CHAPTER IX.

PURSUED BY CANNIBALS.

WE rapidly "rose" the lower part of the island, and here and there among the trees we could see wreaths of silvery smoke, the brown thatch of native huts, groves of bananas, and clearings, where the people grew yams and other vegetables. As soon as we saw this, Bill Seaman and myself were for landing at once; but a heavy surf which was beating on the shore prevented this, and Tom said he would not consent to landing at any place until it was absolutely necessary to get food or water, unless he saw white men, for many of the inhabitants of the South Sea Islands were cannibals, and, if we fell into their hands, would think nothing of killing and eating us.

We skirted along the northern shore, and soon saw that Tom had been right in saying that the burning mountain was probably in the middle of a group of islands, for by mid-day we could see the tops of other islands away to the northward and westward.

We now debated what we should do, and after

much argument decided we should coast along the shore of the large island of which the fiery mountain formed the centre, and look for some signs of the house of a trader or missionary ; and if we saw one, to land there at once and make known our story.

Along the lee-side of the island we found there was no surf, but the shore sloped down into the sea, fringed by a belt of sand of silvery whiteness, the outline being here and there broken by small creeks running up inland ; but the fair beauty of the scene was marred by broad scars where the liquid fire from the mountain was pouring into the sea, and by patches where tree, shrub, and hut had been involved in one common ruin and buried in ashes and cinders.

One of the streams of molten lava pouring into the sea caused clouds of white steam to rise, and made the water so hot for a considerable distance that the fish had all been killed, and were floating on the surface half cooked.

To the meeting of fire and water we gave a wide berth, skirting round the line of steam and heat, though we managed to pick up some of the half-cooked fishes.

Soon after passing this we lost the wind, being cut off from the trades by the bulk of the mountain, and having to resort to our paddles to get the *Escape* along, which was slow and tedious work ; and though we saw among the trees several villages composed of huts which consisted only of roofs without any walls,

we saw nowhere any signs of the habitations of either missionary or trader.

Late in the afternoon we saw an entrance to a creek between two overhanging rocks, and after much thought we decided that we would run the risk of putting in there for the night.

Before paddling in we loaded our muskets and looked to their priming, in case we should be attacked; but as we got inside the entrance, we saw there were no signs of any inhabitants. So, tying our boat up to the trunk of a tree close to the right-hand rock, we landed, and gave our legs a stretch along the beach, for we had found ourselves much cramped by the close quarters aboard of our little craft.

As soon as we had, as Bill said, got the kinks out of our legs, Tom set us to work to clear out and restow our stores, which had been pretty well tossed about while we were passing through the waves caused by the explosions of the volcano and the consequent earthquakes.

We found, indeed, that it was fortunate we had come in, for the greater portion of our stock of fresh water had been spoiled or capsized, and we took some time in replenishing it from a spring, and it was quite dark before we had got all things to rights and restowed.

I and Bill were about to light a fire on the beach to cook our supper, when Tom said,—

“For goodness’ sake, don’t be such fools; we don’t

know nothing of what sort of folks there be in the island, and if they see fire we may have a lot of murdering cannibals down atop of us afore ever we know where we are."

"But it's cold, mate, and I want to roast some corn. It's bad eating dry corn, like a horse," said Bill.

"Very true," said Tom; "but I fancy there's a sort of cave just here, and we can make a fire inside and sleep there warm and comfortable."

"Where away, Tom?" I asked.

"Not thirty fathoms away. Now, come on, as I marked it;" and following Tom we came to a hole in the rock which was almost hidden by a mass of creepers, and drawing them aside he told one of us to go in with an armful of dry leaves and set them on fire to see what it was like.

Both Bill and I were too much afraid to go into the cave in the dark, for fear we might come across some wild beast; so Tom, laughing at our fears, stooped down and went in alone. He soon had a fire of dry leaves burning, and called us to come, for there was no danger; and now that there was a light we did not hesitate, and found ourselves in a cave about twenty feet long by twelve wide and seven high, the floor of which was covered with fine, dry, white sand, while the roof and walls were of a dark, rough rock.

"There, mates," said Tom; "there's a bedroom fit for a king. Now, as we're near men, we can't all

sleep at once; so as soon as we've had our supper we'll settle about watches."

Bill said that as he was cook he would have the morning, and Tom agreed that he should keep the first and I the middle watch.

Bill and I were soon asleep, for we were thoroughly tired; and I believe that Tom took pity on us both, for when he roused me out I am sure that the greater part of the night had passed away.

He had been walking up and down between the cave and the boat, carrying a musket, and told me to do the same, and to be careful to notice the smallest sounds. I said I would, and he then pointed out the position of the Southern Cross, and where it should reach before I called Bill, and went to his well-earned rest.

I walked up and down as I was told, though I must confess that I felt a most undeniable longing to sit down; but as, when I once leaned up against a palm tree, I found that I began to nod and dropped my musket, I refrained, and walked up and down steadily until the Southern Cross told me it was time to rouse Bill out.

He protested that he had only just lain down, and would not believe that the time for his watch had come; and it was not until I threatened to douse him with cold water that he would turn out and relieve me. I gave him the same orders as Tom had given me, and warned him to be specially careful when he

made up the fire, so that no smoke should escape out of our cave, lest it might be seen by the natives.

I lay down again as soon as he was on watch, and was asleep in a moment. From my sleep I was awaked by Tom shouting out, "What's up? There's a musket-shot!" and we both rushed out of the cave, and found that Bill was nowhere to be seen.

Tom and I at once seized our muskets, saw that the boat was ready to shove off at a moment's notice, and called out to Bill to know where he was.

Almost directly afterwards we saw a man running towards us, who fell down at our feet and caught hold of our knees; and then, before we could make out what it meant, we heard another shot, and saw Bill burst from some trees near, his musket in his hands still smoking, and crying, "Jump into the boat and shove off; there are a whole heap of people after me."

We all jumped into the boat, followed by the stranger, who had nothing on him but a necklace of sharks' teeth and shells, who said, "Plenty bad mans want kiki* me."

We seized our paddles, and began to pull out of the creek, and were only just in time; for some twenty men, armed with spears and arrows, came rushing on the beach and let fly at us.

Our new companion seized a musket and fired at them in return, knocking over a great big fellow

who seemed to be the leader. This stopped them for a moment, but evidently they did not mean to let us off easily, for half a dozen or more plunged into the water and began to swim after us.

We paddled away for dear life, but the swimmers swam so fast that we saw they would soon catch us up unless something stopped them. "Pull, lads, pull for your lives!" cried Tom.

"Ay," said Bill, "pull all you know. They're murdering cannibals, and had killed one man, and were going to kill this fellow, when I shot one who was going to knock him over the head with a big club."

We pulled with all our might, and got out from between the two rocks, with the swimmers only two or three fathoms astern of us, and straining every nerve to catch us up. It was fortunate for us in one way that they were so close, for their friends ashore were afraid to shoot their arrows at us, for fear of hitting their comrades in the water.

The man Bill had rescued wanted to fire another shot, saying, "Plenty bad mans. Kill white man. Kiki them. Kiki white Mary* three moons."

Tom, however, said he would not fire again unless it was necessary, and told the stranger to take my paddle, while I reloaded the muskets that had been fired, and came aft to be ready to resist any man that might catch hold of the boat.

* Woman.

The old boat went through the water as fast as my companions could urge her; but still the swimmers gained, and presently the leading man took a tomahawk from his belt and hurled it at me.

If I had not seen it I should not have believed that a swimmer could have thrown a weapon with such force. It came flying straight at me, and if I had not dodged, it would have struck me dead; but it buried itself in our deck without doing harm to any of us.

"Shall I fire, Tom?" I called out. "There's another going to throw at us."

"Yes," he said; "but take a careful aim."

I raised the musket to my shoulder, and aimed at a man who had raised himself up to throw his tomahawk, but I could scarcely bring myself to press the trigger to take away a man's life.

Before I did, the man hurled his tomahawk at me, which struck the musket out of my hands, and it fell overboard, going off as it did so without harm to any one.

"Come, Sam, that'll never do," said Tom; "take hold of my oar," and he picked up another musket, and taking steady aim fired, and wounded the man who was now in front of the other swimmers, and not more than nine feet away from us.

His companions took no notice of the wounded man, and still pressed on in chase; so Tom fired again, and wounded another. Even this did not stop

them; and although he wounded one more, the others managed to get up and catch hold of the boat.

We all boated our paddles and seized upon the muskets, which we clubbed, and beat our assailants off; but one managed to get a footing on board, and seized upon the man whom we had rescued, and endeavoured to stab him with a knife made of hoop-iron. We were still busy beating off the others, and had neither time nor opportunity to help our new friend; but just as we had finished repulsing our other assailants, and were turning to come to his assistance, we saw that he had managed to wrest the knife from his opponent, and giving him two savage stabs he thrust him overboard.

We again bent to our paddles, our guest telling us in broken English to pull away from the island and steer for one which he pointed out down to leeward. We soon got out from under the lee of the island, and made all sail in the given direction, and then began to ask Bill how all the trouble began.

"Well, mates, you know how as I had the morning watch; and when Sam roused me out, I took the musket and marched up and down like a sojer on sentry-go, and heard never a sound, till just about when it began to get light I thought I would go up above the creek for a bit and look about. Well, so I went up through some trees, and then I came to a sort of a path, and went along for a matter of two or maybe three hundred yards, and then I thought I

heard some men a-talking. I drops down at once on all fours, and begins to creep along towards them through the bushes; and I comes after a bit to the edge of an open space in the midst of which there was a big tree, and under the tree was an open hut in which there were an idol a-standing, with necklaces and all manner of things on it.

"In front of the hut there were a fire burning and a matter of thirty or forty men around it, and some one were cutting up a dead man, and two other bodies was a-lying on the ground, and this chap here were tied up to a post. I didn't feel over comfortable, and thought as how I'd better be making tracks for the boat, when I sees one of the cannibals cut this fellow adrift and bring him out in the middle, and was just a-going to knock him on the head, when I fires and he falls. Our chum here he runs to me, and we both runs as hard as we could with all the other chaps after us hot-foot, and I a-ramming a cartridge into my gun, and so down we comes. And when I'd loaded I turned round, and then I sees a big chap close after me with a spear; so I up and let fly at him so close as I almost touched him. And then as he falls I run again and finds you and the boat all ready, and Johnny here aboard of her. And the rest—why, mates, you knows it as well as I do."

"Thank ye, Bill," said Tom. "It's lucky it's all figured out as it has, and we've saved Johnny's life, as you call him; but mind, you had no business to go

cruising about when you were on the lookout, and next time as it happens Sam here and I will have to reckon with you for it."

While Bill had been telling his story, the man he had rescued was sitting down looking alternately at the island we had left and the one we were steering for, and gnawing away at a piece of pork we had given him in a manner that showed that at all events his appetite had not been impaired by the narrow shave he had had of being killed and eaten.

"Here, Johnny," said Tom; "you savey English. You spin us your yarn, and tell us who you are, and where you hail from, and what brought you into the fix you were in."

CHAPTER X.

A DESPERATE STRUGGLE.

“CERTAIN, sir, me speak Englis’; me live along a white man two yam time; me talky all proper.” And then, as if to prove his intimate acquaintance with our language, he gave a volley of oaths, which for piquancy and nautical flavour it would be hard to surpass.

“Here, stow that, mate; we want no swearing in this craft.”

“Hi! what? You be missionally man—no speak ’trong? Englis’ man, ’Mellican man, he speak people so.”

“Never mind; just talk without any Englis’ man or ’Mellican man palaver, as you call it. Who are you?”

“Me? Why, me be one big man, son one chief. Fader he name Wanga; me him name Calla. Fader he lib along of there,” pointing to the island we were steering for. “Aneitou him name. One white he stay there comprar* copra, bechmer, shell—all

* Buy.

kind. Now one moon and one bit, me come to here for find copra, slug, sandal-wood, and make plenty trade what time mountain he blow. Dem island nigger say he be me, and catch me" (and on his fingers he counted carefully). "Two ten and two men live along of me. Plenty kiki. Kiki one and two ten, and then come where him boy come. Kill one man, two man, and make right kill me, when white boy he shoot, and nigger he tumble so."

"Well, now, in your island—Aneitou, you call it—you say there's a white man."

"One man live there many yam time, and what time ship come plenty square gin. My! den he drink."

"When does a ship come?"

"Sometime one yam time, sometime two, sometime three yam time."

"You see, mates, there's a chance. A ship looks in once in one, two, or three years; and I suppose this white man is some drunken old beach-comber. Anyway, we won't be eaten there," said Tom.

"What are you looking at, Johnny," interrupted Bill, for he noticed that Calla was evidently anxiously looking at the island we had left.

"Be still, white man. Man flog war-drum for fight. Me look see where war-canoe come."

"What?" we cried all together; "a war-canoe in chase of us! Do you see one?"

"No, me no see; but me sabey what time man flog

war-drum, all same that. Plenty soon all man go for war-canoe."

We had not noticed any sound; but now, listening intently, we could catch a few weird notes drifting down the wind towards us.

"Him plenty bad," said Calla. "Him call five plenty big canoe. One canoe him have men four ten, five ten; come along plenty quick."

"I hope the wind'll hold, lads," said Tom; "these big canoes go as fast as a ship with stuns'ls both sides."

Though we were tired, we got out our paddles and oar, and rigged up another mat or two as studding-sails, so as to make as much headway as possible, and get within sight of Aneitou, whose people Calla told us would send out their canoes to meet those from the volcanic island, if they saw them coming.

We paddled and pulled, taking turns to steer, Calla doing yeoman service at a paddle; but after an hour or so, during which we had made some ten or twelve miles, and were about half-way across, we could hear the sounds of the war-drums astern of us. Calla laid in his paddle, and wanted to climb up our mast; but Tom pulled him down, for fear of capsizing the boat.

"Me want see how many canoe come. Plenty big chief live along of they. Big drum, big god, they bring in canoe."

"Never mind now, Johnny; wait a bit. We'll be able to see them from the deck soon. Paddle away."

We kept on, straining every nerve, and the breeze

fortunately freshening we made good way towards Aneitou; but the sound of the war-drums of our pursuers became louder and louder, and soon Calla, jumping up again, declared he could see them coming, and made us understand that before ever we could reach Aneitou they would be up with us.

"But, I say, Johnny," I asked, "where are your canoes from your island? They must hear the drums now."

Calla answered, "That live for true; but s'pose hear drum—man run one side, where canoe he be, and men make get bow and spear, make long time."

"Give way, lads," said Tom. "It's no use wasting our breath talking. The nearer we get to this fellow's island, the better chance we have. It's a bad business, Sam, that you let that musket fall overboard. We have none now for Calla, who could use one well."

Tom, when he had said this, paddled away some time in silence, Bill pulling the oar, and I steering; but the sound of the drums of our pursuers came nearer, and at last Tom said, "I can stand this no longer," and laying in his paddle looked to the loading of our muskets, and cutting up some bullets into quarters he put them in on the top of the ordinary charge, and saw that the flints were properly fixed and touch-holes clear.

When he had done this he stood up and said, "I can see the canoes now. There are five, as Calla said—great big double ones; and besides the men

paddling, there are a lot of chaps up on a great platform amidships."

"How long before they'll be up with us?" I asked. "Can we fetch Aneitou before they catch us?"

Tom looked round and said, "I scarcely dare say that. There's a point as runs out, where maybe we might do it; but there's such a surf a-tumbling on it as would smash up us and the *Escape*, and all belonging to us."

"Have a good look, mate, and see if there mayn't be a break in the surf," I said.

Calla, who had been listening to what we were saying, now got up and stood alongside Tom, and pointed out what to him had been undistinguishable—half a dozen black spots falling and rising on the surface of the sea near the point.

"There, them be Aneitou canoe. White man he come along of them."

"How can you tell?" said Tom.

"Me sabey him canoe." And then looking to windward at our pursuers, Calla said, "Now plenty soon big corroboree. Aneitou men and Paraka men" (Paraka was the name of the volcanic island) "come all one time to we."

"Pull away lads, pull away," cried Tom; "as Calla says, we shall be saved yet, though I must own I thought at one time we should be caught. I own it ain't so much the being killed I don't like, as the being eaten after."

"Why, what difference can that make?" said Bill and I together.

"Why, I don't know as it makes any difference, but I owns as I should like to be buried shipshape and Bristol fashion, sewed up in a hammock with a twenty-four pound shot at my feet and a stitch through my nose."

As we pulled along after this discussion, the drums of our pursuers sounded closer and closer; and presently, mingled with their deep boom, we could hear the war-song of the men who occupied their fighting-decks.

I looked round and saw astern of us, not more than five hundred yards away, the five great double canoes, with their lofty prows ornamented with human hair, skulls, and mother-of-pearl, while high up on their platforms, surrounded by warriors armed with spears and bows, were the sacred drums, on which fellows fantastically painted in white, red, and yellow were vigorously beating a kind of tune, to which the paddles kept time, making their strange craft fly through the water.

As far as I could make out, there were about thirty paddles in each of the canoes, and some twenty warriors on the platform; so that fifty men, as Calla had said, were about the complement of each canoe.

"O Tom," I said, "do shoot at them; they're so close."

"Not yet, mate; wait a bit. We shouldn't do them no harm now, and every inch brings us nearer to

Calla's friends. Hark ! don't you hear their drums and war-song now ? ”

Certainly the sound came up to us against the wind, and looking in that direction I saw the six canoes Calla had said were coming to our relief paddling up against wind and sea in a smother of foam, while from a pole on board one of them there floated a tiny flag, which I could not distinguish.

Calla, when he heard the sound of the drums and songs of his fellow-islanders, laid in his paddle, and seizing on an axe and knife commenced a dance in which he defied his late captors, accompanying it with screeches and howls of which I should have thought no human throat could be capable.

Closer and closer drew the canoes from Paraka, but still faster did we run down on those from Aneitou ; and before Tom thought it well to open fire on our pursuers, we were passing through the fleet of our friends. And on the deck of the one on which we had seen the pole and flag, which we now made out to be an English red ensign, we could see mounted a small cannon, and standing by its breech a white man with a lighted match in his hand.

He hailed us as we passed to shorten sail and round to, and, if we had muskets, to open fire on the men of Paraka ; and almost immediately his cannon rang out, pouring death and destruction amid the crew of the biggest of his opponents' canoes.

We doused the mats we had as studding-sails, and

took in our other sails ; but by the time we had done so, we were at least a quarter of a mile from the two fleets of canoes, which had now met and grappled, and all whose occupants were by this time engaged in deadly conflict.

"Well, mates," said Tom, "I suppose we must go and lend a hand. There's hot work going on there, and it's only fair that we should help those who came out to help us."

No urging on his part was necessary, and we buckled to to pull back to where the fight was going on ; but before we could reach the scene of conflict the fortune of the day had declared pretty decisively in favour of our friends.

The canoe which carried the white man had riddled one of the hulls of the double canoe carrying the leader of the men of Paraka, and in sinking it had so dragged down its twin that the whole fabric had capsized, and her crew, or such of them as were still alive, were struggling in the water.

Calla was mad with desire for fight, and it was not long before we got up near to the canoes. At first Tom thought it would be best to lay off and use our muskets, but we could not distinguish friend from foe ; so, arming ourselves with trade hatchets stuck in our belts, we laid our boat alongside the canoe on board which the Englishman was, and springing on board, made our painter fast round one of her stern heads, and then forced our way to where our country-

man was fighting at the head of his followers. But by the time we had reached him the men of Paraka had had enough, and two of their canoes, which were able to do so, sought safety in flight.

The others remained in the hands of the men of Aneitou, who secured such of the occupants as were still alive with lashings of sinnet, and then looked after their own dead and wounded.

Some of the Paraka men seemed to prefer to trust themselves to the waves to remaining in the hands of their enemies; but they gained little by doing so, for volleys of arrows were fired at them as they swam, and some of the more eager of the warriors of Aneitou plunged into the water in pursuit, and the conflict which had ended in the canoes began afresh in the sea.

Calla, with cries of joy, rushed to an old man, who was in full war-paint, and whose necklaces and bracelets of shells and beads and lofty head-dress of feathers seemed to denote a chief, and who held in his hand a rugged club, clotted with brains and gore, and kneeling down before him began a long and voluble speech, pointing the while to the two fugitive canoes.

The old chief was none other than Calla's father, Wanga, and he raised up his son, and calling to some of his men gave orders which we could not understand, but of which the purport was soon evident, for the two least damaged of the canoes of Aneitou were

hastily manned with unwounded crews, and their fighting-decks filled with warriors, among whom Calla took a prominent position, being easily distinguished, he alone being unadorned with war-paint; and soon these two were darting over the waves in pursuit of the beaten and flying men of Paraka.

While this was going on, we were speaking to the white man, who, when we came to where he was standing, said, "Why, where on earth did ye drop from? A shipwreck, I s'pose. How long ago? Ye've rigged that craft of yours up on some island."

Tom told him our story in as few words as he could, and said how thankful we were to have met him, and be rescued from being killed, cooked, and eaten, which would doubtless have been our fate if we had fallen into the hands of the Paraka cannibals.

"That 'ud be about your lot anywheres here, for all of 'em eat men; only as how as you've brought off Calla, and his father's a big man in his island, you may be safe for a time."

"Well, but how do you live among them? Why haven't they eaten you?"

"Oh, I've been too useful to 'em for 'em to want to eat me; and, besides, an old shellback such as I am would be too tough to make anything but soup of. But now, mates, let's be getting home again; and when we come to my shanty, which is just behind the point where the canoes came from, we can have a palaver, and overhaul all our logs. I'll come along of you in

your craft and pilot you in. Can you stow a couple or four black fellows and their paddles? They'll help you along."

We eagerly agreed to the help of the natives, who with their great carved paddles certainly added much to our speed.

CHAPTER XI.

BRISTOL BOB.

“WELL, this here be a queer craft, and no mistake,” said our new friend, who told us his name was “Bristol Bob,” or “Bob” for short, when he had squatted down on the after-deck alongside of Tom, who was steering.

“Now, mates, fighting’s thirsty work ; haven’t you ever a drop to drink,” asked Bristol Bob, “and a bit of bacca ?”

I at once got him a drink of water, and said I’d hunt up some tobacco and a pipe for him.

“Water, lad ? Well, I’ll have a drink ; but haven’t you got anything better—no rum nor square gin ?”

“There is a bottle of spirits, which we have kept ; but it’s stowed away, and I can’t get it out unless we unstow the whole boat,” I answered.

“Never mind,” replied Bristol Bob, “I can do without it till we land. Fancy, lads, it’s three months since I’ve had a tot of grog, and till another trader comes round I shall have to go thirsty.”

All three of us—Tom, Bill, and myself—did not

much care about this, for on board the *Golden Fleece* we had seen quite enough of the evils of drunkenness, and looked at each other rather gloomily. But all of a sudden I noticed that Bristol Bob's shirt was stained with blood, and said to him,—

“Why, you're wounded.”

“Why, yes, lad,” he said, “I believe I am; but you won't think much of such a scratch as that when you've been knocking about as many years as I have.”

Tom and I, however, insisted on examining his wound while Bill steered, and pulling off his shirt we found under his left arm a small, punctured wound from which the blood was oozing slowly.

“Ah,” said Tom, “it don't seem much; it ain't more than a prick.”

One of the natives, however, who was watching what we were about, when he saw the wound, looked grave, and laying his paddle in, came and looked at it.

He said something to Bristol Bob which we did not understand, but as soon as he heard it the latter said,—

“Well, it don't look much, but it may give me my walking ticket. Here, take my knife—it's sharp enough; and if you can feel anything inside, cut it out.”

Tom felt carefully round the wound, and after some little time said,—

“I feel something like a splinter here, about an inch and a half from the hole.”

"Cut it out, then," said Bristol Bob. "Don't be afeared, but cut well in."

Tom said he hardly liked to do so, but the wounded man insisted ; so Tom cut in carefully, and found imbedded in the flesh a splinter of bone as sharp as a needle and two inches long, which he drew out and gave to his patient.

"Ah," he said, "'tis as I thought. It's one of they bone-pointed arrows has struck me, and they's woundy poisonous things."

I had now taken off my own shirt, which was but a ragged garment, and begun to tear it into strips to bind the wound up, but Bristol Bob said,—

"No, lad ; don't bind it up yet. We'll burn it a bit first to get the poison out. Have you a cartridge handy ?"

"Why, yes," I said. "What do you want done ?"

"Just empty the powder into the cut, and set it alight, and you may give me the bullet to chew the while."

I and Tom looked aghast at this proposal ; but Bristol Bob insisted, and laid himself down so that the powder could be put in the wound, and taking the bullet in his mouth he told us to fire it.

He rolled about and groaned while the powder was fizzing and sputtering, but less than we had expected ; and when it was burned out he gave a long breath, and said,—

"You can lash it up now, and put some oil or grease on it, if you have any."

Fortunately, we had brought a little cocoanut oil from Ring Island with us, and soaking some rag in this we put it over the burnt wound, and lashed it in place as well as we were able.

By the time this was done we were past the point from which the canoes had put out, and saw behind it a large bay, in one corner of which was a little island some three hundred yards long and a hundred wide, on which was a hut with whitewashed walls standing in the middle of a grove of bananas.

"There's my shanty, lads," said Bristol Bob, who was smoking his pipe as if nothing was the matter with him. "I finds it best to be away from the mainland, for none of these people is to be trusted over much; though for the matter of that water don't make much matter to them, for they swims like fishes. Up there," he said, pointing to the other side of the bay, "is Wanga's village—there where you see the cocoanuts growing in a cluster."

We steered for Bristol Bob's island, and found behind it a perfectly secure anchorage for the *Escape*, and moored her carefully, and cleared out all her cargo.

Bristol Bob told us we were welcome to quarters in his house, which consisted of two rooms, one of which was locked up, being a store, and the other, twelve feet by twenty, was the living-room and bedroom all in one.

Close by were half a dozen native huts, which were only like thatched roofs resting on the ground, without walls, and open at both ends, in which lived some of the natives who were in his employment.

The men, except those who had come back in the *Escape* with us, were away in the war-canoes; but a dozen women and a lot of children were about, and soon carried up our traps to the house, where we found Bristol Bob lying down on his bed groaning.

"Are you very bad?" said Tom. "What can we do for you?"

"Nought," he replied. "It's only the pain of the burn. But where's that bottle of grog you spoke about? I'll have a tot, and that maybe will send me to sleep."

We tried to dissuade him from drinking while he was suffering from his wound, but it was of no avail. He possessed himself of our bottle, and drank more than half of it, with the addition of very little water; and then he put the bottle under his head, saying that it would be handy if he was thirsty, and soon after fell asleep.

The room was a queer place. In each corner was a sort of bed-place furnished with blankets and rugs, on one of which Bristol Bob was sleeping. In the middle was a rude table, not over clean, which, with some stools and chests, completed the furniture.

We stowed away our belongings, and then, being somewhat hungry, we thought of getting something to

eat, and went outside to find a place where we could cook ; but one of the women, when she saw us making a fire, made signs that she had something ready for us, and brought in a large tin dish, in which was a sort of stew of fowls and salt pork, and two great yams which had been roasted in the ashes, and put them on the table, with some salt and capsicums.

As she left us when she had placed the food on the table, we supposed we should have to eat, as we had hitherto been doing, with our knives, and from the common dish ; but Bill, who was always looking into holes and corners, found a sort of cupboard in one corner of the room in which were some coarse delf plates, steel forks, and pewter spoons, and also some drinking-vessels.

" Here we are. We can eat more respectably now," said Bill. " But, hark ! what's that noise ? "

Boom, boom, boom, came the sound of the huge drums of the natives, and mingling with their notes were shouts of revelry and shrieks of horror.

Bristol Bob, who had been sleeping, breathing hard and uneasily, began to move and toss on his bed, and presently sat up and stared around.

" What's that ? " he said. " The death-drums they're beating for me ? "

Tom at once went up to him and asked him how he was, and if he could do anything for him.

" Who are you ? " said the sick man, whose eyes were now lighted up with the glare of fever.

"Where do you come from?" And then, putting his hand under the pillow, he seized upon the bottle, and putting it to his lips took a long draught which almost emptied it.

"Ha!" he said, "I have it. Calla and Wanga are having a feast, and they'll murder and eat me. Come; there's not a moment to be lost."

As he said this, Bristol Bob sprang from his couch; and seizing an axe which hung on the wall above it, he rushed out of his hut.

We followed him, wondering what he intended to do, and quickly as he went we were close on his heels, as he made his way to a small mound some thirty yards away. Here he stopped, and said,—

"Ha! ha! they shan't eat me yet," and then stooping down he began to clear away some leaves and wood, and disclosed a small door set in the ground and framed with stout posts. This he opened, and disclosed a passage dug in the ground, down which he went, followed by Bill and me; while Tom, who feared that Bristol Bob's ravings might have some meaning, stopped behind to close and bar the door.

At the end of the passage we came into a chamber about twelve feet square every way, and here the wounded man struck a light with a flint and steel, and lighted a rude cocoanut-oil lamp.

By its feeble rays we could see that here were stowed away four or five kegs and a couple of small boxes. On one of the latter the madman, for Bristol

Bob, from the combined effects of spirits and fever, was now no better than a maniac, placed the lamp, and then, with his axe, stove in the head of one of the kegs, which to our horror we saw was full of gunpowder.

The powder he poured on the floor near the other kegs, and then loosened their staves by a blow from his axe, so that the powder they contained would mix with that he had poured on the ground; and then he stood up and laughed as he rubbed his hands.

"They think they'll eat Bristol Bob? Not if I knows it. I'll blow myself up first."

Bill and I stood aghast at his proceedings, and even watched Bristol Bob reach for his lamp to light the powder without interfering or moving, when Tom, who had secured the door, came down the passage, and saw at a glance what was going on.

Without any pause or hesitation he dashed at the madman, and snatched the lamp away and blew it out. Bristol Bob, with a roar like a wild beast, seized the smouldering wick, and threw it on the powder, where it lay smoking.

Tom, who was struggling with Bristol Bob, shouted to us to take the wick off the powder, or we should be all blown up. I was so unmanned by terror that I covered my eyes and waited for the explosion, paralyzed with fear, and Bill has since owned to me that he was as frightened as I was.

The time passed, and no explosion took place, though

we could hear the sound of the struggles of Tom and Bristol Bob as they rolled on the ground, and the cries of the former to take the wick off the powder.

Finding that we were not blown up, I uncovered my eyes, and saw the wick still lying on the powder, a dull red spot covered with grey ash at the end of it; and mustering up all my resolution I stooped down, caught it away, and extinguished it.

"That's right," I heard Tom say. "Here, one of you, help me with this fellow—he's most too much for me; and the other go up and unbar the door, and let's get out of this."

I went to Tom's help, and together we managed to get Bristol Bob down, while Bill went up and unbarred and opened the door; and then, coming down to our assistance, he helped to drag the poor fellow back to his hut, where we placed him on his bed, and tied his hands and feet to prevent his doing any more mischief. But now he seemed in a sort of stupor.

This done, Tom replaced the dressing on his wound, and told Bill and me to go back and close and cover up the door of the place where the powder was. When this was done we came back to the hut. We found Tom sitting down with his elbows on his knees, and holding his head between his hands, while Bristol Bob moaned wearily on his couch; and always we heard the weird sound of the native drums.

We spoke to Tom two or three times before he looked up, and when he did he said,—

"I can't make it out why the powder did not fire. It must have been damp or something; but anyway, 'tis only by the mercy of God we have been saved. Let us kneel down and thank Him for preserving us from great peril, and implore Him to guard us in the future as He has done in the past."

When we had finished, I said to him,—

"How is it that you are so different from all other sailors? On board the *Fleece*, from the captain downwards, every one but you swore and used bad language."

"Not from all other sailors, Sam. I learned it aboard of my first ship. Her captain was really a good man; but there's no time to talk of these matters now. I doubt not that Bristol Bob's madness had some reason in it, and that over at the chief's village there's murder and all sorts of horrors going on. The sound of them drums goes right through me. Now, if the idea gets in the savages' heads to come after us, I don't believe Calla nor Wanga nor any of their chiefs could hinder them, so we must keep a good lookout. I wish they had brought back the little cannon that was in the canoe."

"What do you suppose they'd do?" asked Bill.

"Why, they might kill and eat us."

"Not really. Why can't we get down to the *Escape* and get away while it's dark?" I said.

"What! with all our provisions and water ashore, and leave this poor fellow here?" said Tom. "No, we

must keep a good lookout until they're all quiet, and then to-morrow we can make our plans for going away."

Even as we were speaking, the drums were beaten with less fury, and the shouts of the natives were less noisy and frequent; and after about another half-hour they ceased altogether.

"Now," said Tom, "you two fellows go to sleep. I'll look after the sick man to see if he wants anything. He seems pretty quiet now, so I'll unleash his hands and feet."

CHAPTER XII.

A SAD EVENT.

I WAS so thoroughly tired that I fell asleep at once, and slept soundly; and when I woke it was already broad daylight, and as I opened my eyes I saw a tall form bending over me with a face painted red and white in broad, horizontal stripes, and thought that cannibals were coming to kill and eat me.

I sprang up with a yell, and called to Tom and Bill that our hour was come, and that I was being killed. However, I was relieved by the painted face which had so frightened me relaxing into a broad grin, and hearing Calla say, for it was he,—

“What for you make big bobbery all same man die? Me Calla.”

I sat up, rubbed my eyes, and looked round. Tom was sitting by Bristol Bob's side, who was tossing restlessly on his bed and groaning, and Bill was at the door of the hut washing himself.

Calla had come over from the mainland of Aneitou to inquire after us, and to say that his father, Wanga,

wished us to come over to his village in the course of the day.

I got up and went over to where Bristol Bob, was lying, followed by Calla, who, looking at him, said,—

“What make him sick? Plenty time him drink no be like this.”

Tom explained as well as he was able how we had found that the patient was wounded, and the subsequent treatment, and how he had drunk a whole bottle of spirits.

“Make see what thing make hole,” said Calla.

Tom, after some little hunting about, found the splinter of bone which he had cut out in the corner of one of his pockets, and gave it to Calla, who examined it eagerly.

After some minutes he said, pointing to the wounded man,—

“Him lib for die. Piece along of him inside.”

“What!” said Tom; “is there a bit inside him yet?”

“You watch,” said Calla; and giving a whistle, a man who had come over to the little islet with him came into the hut.

To him Calla said something, and he went away, but presently returned, bringing with him a quiver made of basket-work ornamented with shells and sharks’ teeth, which he gave to Calla, who opened it and carefully drew an arrow tipped with a splinter

of bone, and putting the piece that had been cut out of Bristol Bob by it, said,—

“You see make same here,” pointing to the middle of the head of the arrow.

Looking carefully, we saw that the bone tip in its entirety was about four inches long, and beautifully worked up, so that the end of it, for more than an inch, was scarcely thicker than a pin, and that then it was cut nearly through.

“You see him piece?” pointing to this long thin part. “Live along Bob. Him die for sure. Plenty bad.”

“Can’t we cut it out as we did the other?” asked Bill.

“No pican white man,” said Calla. “Him along a bone. No can see or catch.”

This sentence of death passed upon the poor fellow affected us very much, and we were intensely disgusted when Calla quite coolly proposed to knock him on the head at once, as he would suffer great pain, and would not again recover consciousness, or, as Calla put it, “Peak along man sabey it.”

To this, of course, we would not consent, and also told Calla that we could not leave the wounded man to go and see his father.

Calla seemed very much displeased about this, and said,—

“Make plenty bobbery along man no lib. He no fit for kiki. What you want?” But seeing that

we were determined to remain, he went away and left us to ourselves.

“Not much civilization about that fellow,” I said. “Although he makes out he ‘live along of white man plenty time,’ I believe he’s just as big a cannibal as the rest of them.”

“Yes,” said Tom. “And though he may think for a time of our having saved his life, if it runs with his interests to kill us after a time, he will do so.”

In this we afterwards found we wronged poor Calla.

“Well, mate,” I said, “what are we to do?”

“Why, first and foremost, we must look after this poor fellow, and when he’s dead, bury him decent like; and after that we must see about getting away. I daresay somewhere down these islands we may find a missionary settlement or a decent trader; anyways, we mustn’t let these people think we’re going, or they’ll find means to stop us. Now, one of you go and find the old woman that gave us supper last night, and make her understand we should like some breakfast.”

I went out to look for the woman, and found that now several men had come to the island, who were the husbands of the women we had seen the day before; and one of them, who possessed a very scanty stock of English, informed me he was “Massa’s bos’n,” and that the others were his “sailor men.”

Bos’n, as he was always called, when I said we wanted “kiki,” called to some women, and I soon had

the satisfaction of seeing the cooking operations in full progress, and then followed Bos'n to a place where he was evidently very anxious that I should come.

Judge of my surprise, on reaching the spot, which was on the shore of the islet, to find, under a thatched roof which covered her, and in a dock cut out of the coral rock, a cutter of about seven tons, with a mast fitted to lower and raise like that of a Thames barge, and with all her sails, spars, and rigging carefully stowed and in good order.

In such a craft I knew that one could easily make a voyage of almost any distance; and lifting up a hatch that covered a sort of well, I found that her below-deck arrangements were as good as those above, and that she had a couple of eighteen-gallon casks for storing water, while on her deck were ring-bolts and fittings for a small gun—doubtless the one which Bristol Bob had taken with him in the war-canoe in the fight against the people of Paraka.

Full of this discovery, I hastened back to the hut, and told my companions of it. They were both delighted, and said that we should, if necessary, be able to make our escape in her more comfortably and easily than in our old craft, which was but a clumsy contrivance after all.

While we were talking, Bristol Bob raised himself up in his bed, and said,—

“Hallo! Who are you, and what d’ye want? What ship d’ye come from?”

Tom at once asked him if he did not remember the fight of the day before, and his being wounded. After some time he said he did, and then Tom told him of what Calla said about his wound.

“ Well, just have a look, will you ? But I expects I has my walking ticket anyways.”

Tom took the dressings off the wound ; but it was now so painful that Bristol Bob refused to allow him to probe it properly or handle it, so he put fresh dressings on.

Bristol Bob now said,—

“ I don’t suppose I have long to live, and I had best spin my yarn to you afore I go. You have come from an island away to windward, where you landed after being left adrift in your boat. Isn’t that so ? ”

“ Yes,” said Tom ; “ and people had been there before, and one man’s skeleton we buried. Some of the others had been buried, and the rest had evidently gone away long before.”

“ Well,” said Bristol Bob, “ I’ve been here at Anei-tou now a matter of seven year, and have traded a bit. But those people who were on that island ran their boat ashore on Paraka before ever I came here, and all of them were eaten up ; and only because I have been useful to these people by making trade for them have I escaped being eaten. Now, listen. There’s a tidy boat of mine on the island here, and aboard of her you may go ’most anywheres ; and if

you leaves here and steers WSW. by compass—there's a compass in my sea-chest—you will, after about ten days, get to an island called Leviji, where there are missionaries. You must mind and not land anywhere before, unless you make out white men ashore; and even then it's best not, for many a beach-comber is as bad as any savage among them. You will know the missionaries' island by its having a mountain with two separate peaks rising up to the same height in the middle."

"Well, well," said Tom, "don't you trouble about that now. We shall manage for ourselves. But what can we do for you now?"

"Nothing, lad, except give me a drink of water. My mouth and throat is that parched I can scarce speak."

Tom held a gourd to the sick man's lips, who drank eagerly, and then said,—

"Thanks, lad. I was even once like you; but my life has been a sad and bitter one, and now it's ending, there's no hope for me."

"Don't say that," answered Tom. "I ain't learned to say much, but one thing I'm certain of, that in the Bible forgiveness is promised to all."

"How, now? Forgiveness for me? No, lad, I'm too bad for that."

"Listen," said Tom, and getting the tattered Bible we had found in the dead man's hut on Ring Island, he read to Bristol Bob the glorious promises of the

Christian religion, and also prayed with him, Bill and I kneeling down with him and joining in the prayers.

After we had finished, Bristol Bob said he felt happier, and trusted that he indeed had found mercy, and asked again for water to drink. But when Tom held a pannikin to his mouth, he was seized with a convulsive shuddering, and dashed it away.

We tried to pour some into his mouth, but all our efforts were fruitless, and we had, after some time, to give up the attempt.

"I know what it is, boys," said poor Bob. "I've seen a many die from these arrow wounds. I don't know what it is, whether it's the poison of the bone arrow or what, but it's an awful death. I may have a short time during which I can speak, and I will tell you all I can how to get away."

The poor fellow now told us of his magazine, of his visit to which during the night he had neither remembrance nor idea, and said that, besides the powder in the two boxes, we should find some beads and corals of considerable value, a small bag of pearls, and about seventy pounds in money. This, he told us, we could keep for ourselves; and then, as soon as he was dead, he begged us to bury him out at sea, so that he could not be dug up and eaten; and that done, he advised us to get away to Leviji as quick as we could. He also said that we were to trust none of the natives, not even Calla, with our plans; but if we had to employ any one, that it should be Bos'n,

who he said he thought was the best man on the islands.

While he was speaking, he was often interrupted by convulsive attacks, which at last became so continuous and so bad that he could no longer talk. Of the scene of horror that ensued while he was wrestling with the frightful disease of tetanus, or lockjaw, I will say nothing—the remembrance of it is even now too dreadful to me; but when, an hour before sunset, he died, we all felt that it was a happy release.

In his storeroom we found some canvas and needles, and as soon as his body was cold, Tom set to work and sewed him up in a seaman's shroud, and lashed some heavy rocks to his feet to sink his body to the bottom of the sea.

Before all was ready, the night had nearly passed, and we lay down to rest for a while, intending, as soon as we woke, to carry the dead body down to the *Escape*, and, paddling her out into the bay, commit it to the deep, in accordance with the wishes Bristol Bob had expressed while still able to speak.

We had not slept long before we were awaked by Calla, who, as soon as the sun had risen, had come over to the little island with a party of armed men to insist upon our going over to the mainland to see his father, Wanga.

We all said that we would go as soon as we had buried the dead man, but not before; but Calla said

that we were to come at once, and that the dead body should be brought along with us.

To this we strongly objected, and when Calla told some men to take up the body and carry it away, Tom knocked the foremost of them down. The others, seeing how their comrade had been treated, were about to strike at Tom with their tomahawks; but Bill and I, seizing our muskets, presented them at Calla, and said that if a single blow were struck we would shoot him.

Tom, too, got his musket, and said that what the dead man had wished should be carried out, and that he would die before he was prevented.

Calla, who seemed to have not overmuch heart in the business, and was, as was afterwards proved, less of a savage than his countrymen, said something to them in his own language, on which they sulkily withdrew, while he tried to prevent our being angry at what had occurred. He said,—

“You sabe Bristol Bob him live along o’ we plenty long time—seven yam time. Him be all one same chief, same my fader Wanga. Make plenty one big bobbery for him die. No kiki he.”

“Never mind, Calla,” Bob said. “We have to do as he told us, and we are going to bury him in the sea.”

“Plenty much queer white man. No care for man kiki he. Fish kiki he say plenty good.”

“Never mind, Calla. We shall do what he said;

and afterwards, if your father wants to see us, we will come over to him."

Calla left us and went away with his men, and we could see that he had plenty of trouble in controlling them ; and indeed, if he had not been the son of the great chief of the island, I doubt not that he would have been unable to do so.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN CAPTIVITY.

AS soon as we were left alone we called Bos'n, who alone of all the men that had lived on the island was to be seen, the rest, with their wives and families, having left as soon as they heard of Bristol Bob's death; and with his help we carried the dead man carefully and reverently down to the boat, and putting off into deep water, launched him overboard, there to remain till that day when the sea shall render up her secrets.

Tom said a short prayer, and then we paddled back again to the shore. As soon as we landed we set about preparing the new boat for our voyage, filling her casks with water, as well as the beakers from the *Escape*, and stowing away all we could think of as provisions. Fortunately on the islet there were several bread-fruit trees and a plantation of yams, and Bos'n, who said he would throw in his lot with us, collected a quantity of these, and piled them up alongside the boat.

As soon as the casks were filled, Tom said he would

go to the magazine to get the boxes we had seen there, and that in the meantime Bill and I had better overhaul the storeroom, and see what was worth taking away with us.

In the store we found all manner of trade goods—calico, beads, hatchets, pipes, brass wire, nails, and other oddments—which might either be useful to or attract the fancy of the savages, and also a couple of harpoons and two coils of whale line.

We at once took the harpoons and lines down with us, as well as some fishing-lines and hooks which were in the dead man's chest, and the compass, and then returned for the box with the money and pearls. When we had stowed these away, Tom came down with one of the boxes from the magazine, and said he wanted Bos'n to help him with the other, and told us to go back and look about the hut for blankets, knives, cooking-gear, and anything else that might be useful.

We set about this with a good will, and trotted backwards and forwards, carrying down all we fancied would be useful. After a time, when I was in the hut overhauling the sea-chest, I heard a scream from Bill, and rushing out, found that he had been seized by a party of natives, some of whom, when they saw me, rushed up, and before I had any chance to resist, threw me on the ground, and lashed my feet together and my arms by my side, so that it was impossible to move, and carried me and Bill, who had been

served in a like manner, to a canoe, in which they had come over from the mainland.

We were laid on a platform, and some half-dozen fellows, painted in most hideous patterns, squatted round, and the canoe was rapidly paddled to the nearest village on the big island of Aneitou. The canoe soon reached the shore, and we were carried up by our captors into the middle of a cleared space surrounded by some half-dozen native huts, which were simply long roofs of thatch, open at both ends, and here we were tied upright to posts planted in the ground.

As soon as we had been placed in this position, a man came from one of the huts and called out some orders, and presently from each hut came two men, bearing a huge wooden drum, the ends of which were fantastically carved. These drums were placed in a circle round the posts to which we were tied, and then the same man who had given the order for them to be brought again shouted out commands; then six men, painted white and red, but stark naked, came out, each carrying two mallets, with long, elastic handles, with which they commenced to belabour the drums in a regular rhythmic cadence.

Presently we heard the sound of distant drums answering those around us, and soon shouts in the neighbouring woods added to the noise. How long this may have gone on I cannot say, for I was in such pain from the lashings which confined me

cutting into my flesh like red-hot irons, was so tormented by the rays of the sun beating on my unprotected head, and in such an agony of parching thirst that moments seemed like hours; but suddenly the drummers gave a grand flourish and ceased. After a moment of intense stillness three beats were given on each drum, and instantly from the huts and the woods around armed warriors rushed forth, brandishing spears and tomahawks.

At first they came crowding round me and my companion in misfortune, poor Bill, who cried out, "I say, Sam, d'ye think they'll eat us alive or kill us first?"—a question to which I could not give any answer, for a big fellow was brandishing a tomahawk close to my eyes, and I was in momentary expectation of having my brains dashed out.

After some minutes the man who had given the orders to the drummers called out a few words, and instantly the noise and confusion ceased, and all the people drew themselves up in small groups around the open space, and in front of each group stood a warrior, who seemed to be a sort of officer.

Again the man who gave orders, and who, we found, was Calla's father, Wanga, spoke, and the men in the groups squatted on the ground, while the officers came and collected round the posts where we were lashed.

Wanga now called out for Calla, who came out of one of the huts without arms and guarded by six

men. Wanga now made a long harangue to the people; and then, turning to Calla, he told him to speak.

We, of course, could not understand a word, but afterwards we learned that Wanga had said that we had done wrong in not giving up the body of Bristol Bob to Calla, and that he was to blame for not having insisted on it.

Calla defended himself by saying that we had saved his life from the people of Paraka, and that it was *tabu* to touch a white man who had died.

This was objected to, and Calla was told that he should, at all events, have brought us over to the village; and he was then sent back into the hut.

The posts to which we were lashed were now taken out of the ground, and with us laid down, while three fellows, who wore necklaces of finger and toe bones, and had whistles made out of thigh-bones, came and danced round us, all the rest of the people remaining perfectly quiet.

While this was going on we heard a dull, smothered roar as of an explosion, and the dancers, who we afterwards found were priests or sorcerers, as well as all the people who were looking on, rushed down to the beach.

I was lying close to Bill, and said, "I wonder what that is; it sounds like the magazine on Bristol Bob's island blown up."

"So it is," said Bill. "I hope Tom ain't damaged,

and that these beggars won't make him prisoner. As long as he's free there's hope for us."

"Yes," I answered, "we can trust Tom not to desert us; but I'm afraid he must be a prisoner, and we shall soon see him here alongside of us."

We had no time to speak any more, for a party of men came back from the beach, and, under the direction of the three priests, took us up on their shoulders, and carried us away at a trot along a narrow path through the woods.

Occasionally our carriers halted to rest or gave way to others, and sometimes we stopped in the middle of villages like the one we had been first taken to, and were exposed to the curiosity of the women and children (for all the men that were able had gone down to the muster of the warriors of the island), and I am bound to say we received no mercy at their hands. They pinched us, and scratched us, and tore off our clothes to see if we were white all over, not caring how they hurt us in doing so, and pulled out our hair; in fact, they showed themselves experts in all the petty arts of torture, and if it had not been that the priests seemed to be somewhat in a hurry, and never allowed a halt in a village for more than ten minutes or so, I verily believe we should have been pinched and scratched to death.

At last we arrived at a sort of temple, consisting of a thatched roof supported on posts which were rudely fashioned into human figures. In the middle

of this building were two idols, a male and a female, on which all the art and industry of the people had been lavished, with a result that combined the grotesque and the horrible in an extraordinary degree.

Their eyes were formed of huge oyster shells pierced in the middle, and in their grinning mouths were double lines of boars' tusks, so that the faces seemed all eyes and teeth. Large wigs of cocoanut fibre covered their heads, and round necks, arms, and legs were strings of beads, shells, and human bones. In their right hand they held a monster fork, like that used by their worshippers in their cannibal feasts, and on these forks and in their left hands were great pieces of bleeding flesh.

In front of these monstrous and disgusting figures were piles of bones and skulls, some of which had hair and flesh still adhering to them. Lamps fed with cocoanut oil were hanging from the rafters, and these lamps were made of human skulls; and as if nothing should be wanting to complete the horror of the scene, huge pigs were rooting about among the remains of humanity with which the ground was strewn.

When we arrived, the lumps of bleeding flesh were removed from the left hands of the idols, and we were hung up in their place.

The men who had carried us here were now sent away, and having become *tabu* by entering into this holy place, as it was considered by the people of

Aneitou, they were while there not allowed to mix with their fellows, but sent to an enclosure reserved for such purposes.

I and Bill were, it is not too much to say, in a state of dismal fright and terror, and the lashings by which we were bound cut into our flesh like bars of red-hot iron, while our lips were cracked and bleeding, and we were the victims of a raging thirst.

After we had hung here for some time, some of the priests of the temple came and cut us down, and we expected that we should at once be done to death ; but, after cutting us adrift, they took us a short distance away into a cave, the entrance to which was closed with thick balks of timber in which there was a small gateway.

Here we were thrust, and water was given us to drink, and the gate being securely barred on the outside, we were left alone.

We instantly relieved our parching thirst, and then set to work to rub each other to ease the pain caused by the lashings which had bound us.

After a time we felt more at ease, and began to consider what would become of us.

"I expect they will kill and eat us," said Bill ; "but surely we can find some way to escape. I would Tom were here ; he'd know what to do."

"I'm afraid Tom must be a prisoner or dead ; but, anyway, let us search round this place, and find if there is any way out. If we could get out, and get

to the beach, and steal a canoe, we might have a chance."

We set to work to examine the entrance to the cave; but the gate and the balks of timber in which it was set were too strong to give us any hope of being able to break through them, so we soon gave up and began to explore the cave itself.

We went in several directions, and found dark holes and passages, into which we crept; but one and all came to an end before we had proceeded far, until we reached the very last, which was only about three feet high at the entrance, but which we found after a time grew lighter and higher, and at last became a large cave, lighted by a small hole near the top.

To this hole we tried to climb; but the rock had been cut away all around it, so that it was perfectly inaccessible, although by the natural roughness of the sides of the cave it was easy to climb up to the roof everywhere else. Opposite the hole, but some fifteen feet from it, was a sort of shelf; and to this we scrambled, so as to look out, and we saw right opposite us the bay in which was Bristol Bob's island.

The island itself we could also see, and the hillock and trees under which the magazine was were blown up, and several of the huts were destroyed, but the dock where the cutter was laid up we could not see, so that we could not make out whether she were safe or not. Our old *Escape* we saw with some men in

her, evidently taking her to Wanga's village, but on the island there was not a soul to be seen.

We sat some time on the shelf trying to get some idea into our heads as to how the hole could be reached, and at last we got down and determined to return to the part of the cave where we had been left by our jailers; but first we looked round where we were, and in one corner we found a pool of fresh water, which was a source of gladness to both of us, for at all events we could make sure of not dying of thirst, and also have a good wash whenever the fancy took us; and take us it did then and there, for we were very dirty and sore, and a bathe did us all the good imaginable.

When we got back to the front cave we found that it had not been visited since we left; but before we had been there ten minutes the gate was unbarred, and a plentiful supply of food—fish, pork, yams, bread-fruit, and bananas—was brought to us, and it was signed to us that we should eat.

We were both hungry, and fell to on the good things provided for us with a hearty appetite, till, suddenly, Bill stopped eating, and said, "I say, mate, they wants to fatten us up to eat us. I don't fancy being stuffed like a turkey in a coop."

The idea took away my appetite at once, and not another mouthful could I swallow; but, nevertheless, we determined to hide the food away, with the idea that, if the priests found us apparently eating enormously,

and yet getting thinner and thinner, they would come to the conclusion that we were worthless for fattening purposes, and would give up the intention, and perchance let us go free.

Accordingly the remnants of our repast were stowed away in one of the small side caves, and it now being night, Bill and I, huddling together for warmth, lay down to sleep.

CHAPTER XIV.

A DIVE FOR LIBERTY.

OUR sleep was broken and disturbed by the noise of drums in the temple, and again and again we woke with a start, and thought that some one had come to call us out to be offered up before the hideous idols, and as often found that our alarm was only caused by a dream.

By the middle of the night the noise outside ceased, and we both being thoroughly wearied out, slept soundly. All at once I was awaked by feeling cold, wet hands on my throat and mouth, and struggled to free myself and shout out; while Bill, roused by my struggles, grunted out, "What's up?"

A voice said, "No make bobbery. Be plenty quiet. Me be Calla come make good for you."

Evidently some one was watching, for we heard people outside speaking, and the noise of the gate being unbarred. While this was doing, Calla stole noiselessly away; and when one of the priests of the temple came in, bearing a great, flaming torch of palm-leaves, and searched about the cave, he could

only find me and Bill ; so, giving us a couple of kicks apiece, he went back and fastened the gate again, evidently displeased at being disturbed.

As soon as he had gone and all was again quiet, Bill and I whispered together, wondering where Calla had come from, and where he had gone.

"I have it," I said, almost forgetting the necessity for speaking low, but remembering myself in time. "Calla was wet ; he must have come by the water."

"How could he?" answered Bill. "There's no passage there."

"Never mind," I said ; " that's where he came from. Let's get down there, and see what we can."

To get to the pool in the dark was easier said than done ; but at last we found our way to the part of the cave where it was, which was dimly lighted by the hole in the side through which we had seen Bristol Bob's island, and we groped about to try to find some way by which Calla could have got in.

Whilst we were thus engaged, we heard a long-drawn breath, and then a rippling in the pool, and then we distinguished a dark form coming to its shore.

"Hist ! hist ! me Calla," he said as he emerged ; and we hurried to him and asked what he wanted, and what was the news of Tom.

"Oh ! Tom he live plenty good. But now one time make go. Dem other men no catch. Know eberyting. Me sabe dis hole no shut below—one

time easy go and come—make people tink plenty ting.”

Evidently Calla had dived in from the outside, and if we could manage to dive as well, we might make our way out of our prison.

Calla proposed that we should dive down, and gave us the direction we were to swim in; and Bill, who was a capital swimmer and diver, according to European standards, slipped fearlessly into the pool, and taking a long breath sank below its surface.

The dive, however, was beyond his capabilities, for he soon reappeared puffing and blowing, and declared that he could not possibly manage it; and when he had rested a bit, he told me he had gone down and down into a sort of passage, where he could feel the rock on either side of him, when he felt as if he would burst, and could endure it no longer, so he had given himself a shove backwards, and returned to the surface.

“No be far,” said Calla; “see me go and come back one time;” and suiting the action to the word he glided down through the water, and in about four minutes returned with a handful of grass which he said he had plucked on the outside.

Bill, encouraged by this, made another attempt, but like ill success attended it; and as for me, I knew that if Bill could not dive out, it was hopeless to think of my being able to do it.

Calla at first seemed very much annoyed; but after

a bit he said, "Me sabey," and dived out of the cave, and soon returned bringing with him a line of cocoanut fibre, and made us understand that he would haul us through the passage.

To be dragged through an underground drain at the end of a rope was a nervous piece of work, but to remain where we were meant danger and captivity; whilst on the other side of the passage was freedom and comparative safety, if Calla was to be trusted, and we did not take long to make up our minds to consent to his proposal.

After a little discussion, Bill and I settled that he should be the first to go; and he promised, if he got through safe, to tie a peculiar knot in the end of the line to show me that he was all right.

We did not take long in securing the line to Bill, and then Calla took the other end in his teeth, and the two together disappeared below the surface. I waited and waited for Calla to come back, and the time seemed intensely long before he again was with me with the piece of line.

I anxiously examined the end for Bill's knot, and when I felt it and learned that he was safely out of the cave, my joy was great, though I was still in a great fright as to what would happen to me. Calla secured the line round me, so that I could not struggle, and telling me to keep my mouth shut, put me in the pool. I felt myself sinking, and then being dragged along, touching rock sometimes above, sometimes

below, and sometimes on either side of me ; and I felt as if the drums of my ears would be broken in, and a sense of oppression on my chest which was almost intolerable. I thought that I would be constrained to open my mouth and shout, and I know that if my limbs had been at liberty I should have struck out, and would have added much to the difficulty of the task Calla had set himself ; but just when I could have endured no longer, I felt myself emerge from the water, and was dragged to the bank by Bill and Calla.

I blew like a porpoise while my lashing was being undone ; and when I had got some breath in my body again, Calla told Bill and me to follow him, and that he would lead us to where Tom was.

We hurried along narrow paths, through tangled woods, and in a very short time arrived at the shores of the bay in which Bristol Bob's island was. Here we found a canoe, into which we got, and paddled off stealthily to the island, where we found Tom safe and sound, and Bristol Bob's little craft prepared for sea, and Bos'n with him.

I longed to ask him what had happened since we were parted ; but Calla was urgent that we should get to sea at once, and run down to some islands where he said "missionary men" lived. And as we had to keep a good lookout for fear of being pursued, and then all of us were so tired, we agreed to sleep in turns, and when we were all rested to communicate our different adventures.

When we were all rested and awake, the island where we had been prisoners had almost faded out of view, and we were safe from pursuit, and running before a steady trade wind.

"Now, mates," said Tom, "I think we have all to thank Calla for saving us, as without him we could have done nothing, and I vote he tells us first how he came to help us."

Calla very shortly told us that we had saved his life, and that he thought it therefore belonged to us; and when his father came to where he was kept prisoner, and provided him with means of escaping, lest he should be killed, he first of all went to Bristol Bob's island, which, after the explosion we had heard (which was indeed the magazine, and which had killed four men), had been *tabu*, where he found Tom and Bos'n, and told them to get the boat ready, while he went himself and got Bill and me out of our prison.

When his story was told, Tom insisted on hearing what had happened to Bill and myself; and having been satisfied, he narrated his own adventures.

"You see, mates, I was away in the magazine when you was carried off, and knowing as I could do nothing, I kept low for a bit, and hid behind some bushes, so as to keep a lookout on what happened. After some time I saw some fellows, who had been hunting all over the island, and several times came nigh on finding me, had made out the whereabouts of the

magazine, and got some torches to go down into it, and almost directly I heard the place blow up.

"Their mates seemed to be pretty well frightened, and didn't wait many minutes nor look for their chums, but bolted to their canoes, and paddled away to the big island for dear life.

"After a bit two big canoes came and paddled round with drums, and a man in one of them shouted out something, and among what he said I could make out 'tabu, tabu,' being repeated several times, and then they went away again.

"When night came, I set to work to get the boat ready if possible; and presently Bos'n, who had been hiding, came to me and helped. Calla came after a while, and told us he would fetch you; and that's the end of it, till you came along of him, and we started."

Our adventures were now almost over, for the next day we fell in with the missionary schooner *Day-spring*, and the missionaries took care of us, and took us to their headquarters.

When we came to overhaul the things we had brought away with us in Bristol Bob's boat, we found that the money and pearls were worth over four thousand pounds, which we divided into four lots, one for each of us, and one for Calla.

Calla said he would now become a "missionary man;" and he, after careful instruction, became a Christian, and lived for many years happy and respected.

Tom Arbor also became a "missionary man,"

shipping in the *Dayspring*, as did the faithful Bos'n, and had risen to be her mate when he met with his death at the hands of savages, to whom he was trying to take the message of peace, and added his name to the list of those martyrs who have sacrificed their lives in the cause of Christianity in the Pacific.

Bill and I, by the advice of the missionaries, went home, and were bound apprentices on board a fine Indiaman, and we both made rapid progress. We always sailed together till Bill's death. He lost his life in attempting to save a shipwrecked crew.

Of the *Golden Fleece* and her crew we never heard, and her fate is one of the mysteries of the sea.

For myself, I have been fortunate and prosperous; and now, after having for some years commanded my own ship, I have settled down to pass the evening of my days in peace and quietness, full of thankfulness for the mercies which have been vouchsafed to me.

THE END.

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